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MY CONFESSION

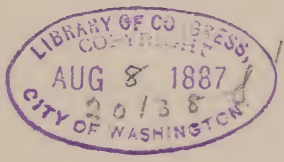
AND

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST'S TEACHING

BY

COUNT LYOF N. TOLSTOÏ

Translated from the Russian



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MY CONFESSION.

MY CONFESSION.

I.

I WAS christened and educated in the faith of the Orthodox Greek Church; I was taught it in my childhood, and I learned it in my youth. Nevertheless, at eighteen years of age, when I quitted the university, I had discarded all belief in anything that I had been taught. To judge by what I can now remember, I could never have had a very serious belief; it must have been a kind of trust in this teaching, based on one in my teachers and elders, and, moreover, a trust not very firmly grounded.

I remember once in my twelfth year, a boy, now long since dead, Vladimir M——, a pupil in a gymnasium, spent a Sunday with us, and brought us the news of the last discovery in the gymnasium, namely, that there was no God,

and that all we were taught on the subject was a mere invention (this was in 1838). I remember well how interested my elder brothers were in this news; I was admitted to their deliberations, and we all eagerly accepted the theory as something particularly attractive and possibly quite true. I remember, also, that when my elder brother, Demetry, then at the university, with the impulsiveness natural to his character, gave himself up to a passionate faith, began to attend the church services regularly, to fast, and to lead a pure and moral life, we all of us, and some older than ourselves, never ceased to hold him up to ridicule, and for some incomprehensible reason gave him the nickname of Noah. I remember that Moussin-Poushkin, the then curator of the University of Kazan, having invited us to a ball, tried to persuade my brother, who had refused the invitation, by the jeering argument that even David danced before the Ark.

I sympathized then with these jokes of my elders, and drew from them this conclusion, that I was bound to learn my catechism, and go to church, but that it was not necessary to

think of my religious duties more seriously. I also remember that I read Voltaire when I was very young, and that his tone of mockery amused without disgusting me. The gradual estrangement from all belief went on in me, as it does, and always has done, in those of the same social position and culture. This falling off, as it seems to me, for the most part goes on as follows: — people live as others live, and their lives are guided, not by the principles of the faith which is taught them, but by their very opposite; belief has no influence on life, nor on the relations between men — it is relegated to some other sphere where life is not; if the two ever come into contact at all, belief is only one of the outward phenomena, and not one of the constituent parts of life.

By a man's life, by his acts, it was then, as it is now, impossible to know whether he was a believer or not. If there be a difference between one who openly professes the doctrines of the Orthodox Church, and one who denies them, the difference is to the advantage of the former. The open profession of the Orthodox doctrines is mostly found among persons of

dull intellects, of stern character, and who think much of their own importance. Intelligence, honesty, frankness, a good heart, and moral conduct are oftener met with among those who are disbelievers. The school-boy is taught his catechism and sent to church; from the grown man is required a certificate of his having taken the holy communion. A man, however, belonging to our class, neither goes to school nor is bound by the regulations affecting those in the public service, and may now live through long years — still more was this the case formerly — without being once reminded of the fact that he lives among Christians, and calls himself a member of the Orthodox Church.

Thus it happens that now, as formerly, the influence of early religious teaching, accepted merely on trust and upheld by authority, gradually fades away under the knowledge and practical experience of later life, which is opposed to all its principles, and that a man often believes for years that his early faith is still intact, while all the time not a particle of it remains in him.

A certain S——, a clever and veracious man, once related to me how he came to cease to believe.

Twenty-six years ago, being on a hunting party, before he lay down to rest, according to a habit of his from childhood, he knelt down to pray. His elder brother, who was of the party, lay on some straw and watched him. When S—— had finished, and was preparing to lie down, his brother said to him, "Ah, you still keep that up?" Nothing more passed between them, but from that day S—— ceased to pray and to go to church. For thirty years S—— has not said a prayer, has not taken the communion, has not been in a church, not because he shared the convictions of his brother, or even knew them, not because he had come to any conclusions of his own, but because his brother's words were like the push of a finger against a wall ready to tumble over with its own weight; they proved to him that what he had taken for belief was an empty form, and that consequently every word he uttered, every sign of the cross he made, every time he bowed his head during his prayers, his

act was an unmeaning one. When he once admitted to himself that such acts had no meaning in them, he could not but discontinue them. Thus it has been, and is, I believe, with the large majority of men.

I speak of men of our class, of men who are true to themselves, and not of those who make of religion a means of obtaining some temporal advantage. (These men are truly absolute unbelievers, for if faith be to them a means of obtaining any worldly end, it is most certainly no faith at all.) Such men of our own class are in the following position: the knowledge and experience of active life has shattered the artificially constructed building of belief within, and they have either observed that and cleared away the superincumbent ruins, or they have remained unconscious of the destruction worked.

The belief instilled from childhood, in me, as in so many others, gradually disappeared, but with this difference, that as from fifteen years of age I had begun to read philosophical works, I was conscious of my own disbelief. From the age of sixteen I ceased to pray, and ceased,

from conviction, to attend the services of the church and to fast. I no longer accepted the faith of my childhood, but I had a vague belief in something, though I do not think I could exactly explain in what. I believed in a God, or rather, I did not deny the existence of God, but anything relating to the nature of that godhead I could not have described; I denied neither Christ nor his teaching, but in what that teaching consisted I could not have said.

Now, when I think over that time, I see clearly that all the faith I had, the only belief which, apart from mere animal instinct, swayed my life, was a belief in a possibility of perfection, though what it was in itself, or what would be its results, I was unable to say. I endeavored to reach perfection in intellectual attainments: my studies were extended in every direction of which my life afforded me a chance; I strove to strengthen my will, forming for myself rules which I forced myself to follow; I did my best to develop my physical powers by every exercise calculated to give strength and agility, and by way of accustoming myself to patient endurance I subjected

myself to many voluntary hardships and trials of privation. All this I looked upon as necessary to obtain the perfection at which I aimed. At first, of course, moral perfection seemed to me the main end, but I soon found myself contemplating in its stead an ideal of general perfectibility; in other words, I wished to be better, not in my own eyes nor in those of God, but in the sight of other men. This feeling again soon ended in another, the desire to have more power than others, to secure for myself a greater share of fame, of social distinction, and of wealth.

II.

At some future time I may relate the story of my life, and dwell in detail on the pathetic and instructive incidents of my youth. Many others must have passed through the same as I did. I honestly desired to make myself a good and virtuous man; but I was young, I had passions, and I stood alone, altogether alone, in my search after virtue. Every time I tried to express the longings of my heart for a truly virtuous life, I was met with contempt and derisive laughter, but directly I gave way to the lowest of my passions, I was praised and encouraged. I found ambition, love of power, love of gain, lechery, pride, anger, vengeance, held in high esteem. I gave way to these passions, and becoming like unto my elders, I felt that the place which I filled in the world satisfied those around me. My kind-hearted aunt, a really good woman, used to say to me, that there was one thing above all others which

she wished for me — an intrigue with a married woman: "Rien ne forme un jeune homme, comme une liaison avec une femme comme il faut." Another of her wishes for my happiness was that I should become an adjutant, and, if possible, to the Emperor; the greatest happiness of all for me she thought would be that I should find a wealthy bride, who would bring me as her dowry an enormous number of slaves.

I cannot now recall those years without a painful feeling of horror and loathing.

I put men to death in war, I fought duels to slay others, I lost at cards, wasted my substance wrung from the sweat of peasants, punished the latter cruelly, rioted with loose women, and deceived men. Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, and murder, all committed by me, not one crime omitted, and yet I was not the less considered by my equals a comparatively moral man. Such was my life during ten years.

During that time I began to write, out of vanity, love of gain, and pride. I followed as a writer the same path which I had chosen as

a man. (In order to obtain the fame and the money for which I wrote, I was obliged to hide what was good and bow down before what was evil.) How often while writing have I cudgelled my brains to conceal under the mask of indifference or pleasantry those yearnings for something better which formed the real problem of my life! I succeeded in my object, and was praised. At twenty-six years of age, on the close of the war, I came to St. Petersburg and made the acquaintance of the authors of the day.

I met with a hearty reception and much flattery.

Before I had time to look around, the prejudices and views of life common to the writers of the class with which I associated became my own, and completely put an end to all my former struggles after a better life. These views, under the influence of the dissipation into which I plunged, issued in a theory of life which justified it. The view of life taken by these my fellow-writers was that life is a development, and the principal part in that development is played by ourselves, the

thinkers, while among the thinkers the chief influence is again due to ourselves, the poets. Our vocation is to teach mankind.

In order to avoid answering the very natural question, "What do I know, and what can I teach?" the theory in question is made to contain the formula that such is not required to be known, but that the thinker and the poet teach unconsciously. I was myself considered a marvellous *littérateur* and poet, and I therefore very naturally adopted this theory. Meanwhile, thinker and poet though I was, I wrote and taught I knew not what. For doing this I received large sums of money; I kept a splendid table, had an excellent lodging, associated with loose women, and received my friends handsomely; moreover, I had fame. It would seem, then, that what I taught must have been good; the faith in poetry and the development of life was a true faith, and I was one of its high priests, a post of great importance, and of profit. I long remained in this belief, and never once doubted its truth.

In the second, however, and especially in the third year of this way of life, I began to

doubt the infallibility of the doctrine, and to examine it more closely. The first doubtful fact which attracted my attention was that the apostles of this belief did not agree among themselves. Some proclaimed that they alone were good and useful teachers, and all others worthless; while those opposed to them said the same of themselves. They disputed, quarrelled, abused, deceived, and cheated one another.

Moreover, there were many among us who, quite indifferent to right or wrong, only cared for their own private interests. All this forced on me doubts as to the truth of our belief. Again, when I doubted this faith in the influence of literary men, I began to examine more closely into the character and conduct of its chief professors, and I convinced myself that these writers were men who led immoral lives, most of them worthless and insignificant individuals, and far beneath the moral level of those with whom I had associated during my former dissipated and military career; these men, however, had none the less an amount of self-confidence only to be expected in those who

are conscious of being saints, or in those for whom holiness is an empty name.)

I grew disgusted with mankind and with myself, and I understood that this belief which I had accepted was a delusion. The strangest thing in all this was that, though I soon saw the falseness of this belief and renounced it, I did not renounce the position I had gained by it; I still called myself a thinker, a poet, and a teacher. (I was simple enough to imagine that I, the poet and thinker, was able to teach other men without knowing myself what it was that I attempted to teach.) I had only gained a new vice by my companionship with these men; it had developed pride in me to a morbid extreme, and my self-confidence in teaching what I did not know amounted almost to insanity. When I now think over that time, and remember my own state of mind and that of these men (a state of mind common enough among thousands still), it seems to me pitiful, terrible, and ridiculous; it excites the feelings which overcome us as we pass through a madhouse. We were all then convinced that it behooved us to speak, to write, and to print as fast as we could, as much

as we could, and that on this depended the welfare of the human race. Hundreds of us wrote, printed, and taught, and all the while confuted and abused each other. Quite unconscious that we ourselves knew nothing, that to the simplest of all problems in life — what is right, and what is wrong — we had no answer, we all went on talking together without one to listen, at times abetting and praising one another on condition that we were abetted and praised in turn, and again turning upon each other in wrath — in short, we reproduced the scenes in a madhouse.

Hundreds of exhausted laborers worked day and night, putting up the type and printing millions of pages to be spread by the post all over Russia, and still we continued to teach, unable to teach enough, angrily complaining the while that we were not listened to. A strange state of things indeed, but now it is clear enough. The real motive that inspired all our reasoning was the desire for money and praise, to obtain which we knew of no other means than writing books and newspapers. In order, however, while thus uselessly employed, to hold fast to the conviction that we were

really of importance to society, it was necessary to justify our occupation to ourselves by another theory, and the following was the one we adopted: Whatever is, is right; everything that is, is due to development, and the latter again to civilization; the measure of civilization is the figure to which the publication of books and newspapers reaches; we are paid and honored for the books and newspapers which we write, and we are therefore the most useful and best of all citizens.

This reasoning might have been conclusive, had we all been agreed; but, as for every opinion expressed by one of us there instantly appeared from another, one diametrically opposite, we had to hesitate before accepting it. But this we passed over; we received money, and were praised by those who agreed with us, consequently we were in the right. It is now clear to me that between ourselves and the inhabitants of a madhouse there was no difference: at the time I only vaguely suspected this, and, like all madmen, thought all were mad except myself.

III.

I LIVED in this senseless manner another six years, up to the time of my marriage. During the interval I had been abroad. My life in Europe, and my acquaintance with many eminent and learned foreigners, confirmed my belief in the doctrine of general perfectibility, as I found the same theory prevailed among them. This belief took the form which is common among most cultivated men of the day. It may be summed up in the word "progress." It then appeared to me this word had a real meaning. I did not understand that, tormented like other men by the question, "How was I to better my life?" when I answered that I must live for progress, I was only repeating the answer of a man carried away in a boat by the waves and the wind, who to the one important question for him, "Where are we to steer?" should answer, saying, "We are being carried somewhere."

This I then did not see; it was only at rare

intervals that my feelings, and not my reason, were roused against the common superstition of our age, which leads men to ignore their own ignorance of life.

Thus, during my stay in Paris, the sight of a public execution revealed to me the weakness of my superstitious belief in progress. When I saw the head divided from the body, and heard the sound with which they fell separately into the box, I understood, not with my reason, but with my whole being, that no theory of the wisdom of all established things, nor of progress, could justify such an act; and that if all the men in the world from the day of creation, by whatever theory, had found this thing necessary, it was not so; it was a bad thing, and that therefore I must judge of what was right and necessary, not by what men said and did, not by progress, but what I felt to be true in my heart.

Another instance of the insufficiency of this superstition of progress as a rule for life was the death of my brother. He fell ill while still young, suffered much during a whole year, and died in great pain. He was a man of good

abilities, of a kind heart, and of a serious temper, but he died without understanding why he had lived, or what his death meant for him. No theories could give an answer to these questions, either to him or to me, during the whole period of his long and painful lingering. Then occasions for doubt, however, were few and far between; on the whole, I continued to live in the profession of the faith of progress. "Everything develops, and I myself develop as well; and why this is so will one day be apparent," was the formula I was obliged to adopt.

On my return from abroad I settled in the country, and occupied myself with the organization of schools for the peasantry. This occupation was especially grateful to me, because it was free from the spirit of falseness so evident to me in the career of a literary teacher.

Here again I acted in the name of progress, but this time I brought a spirit of critical inquiry to the system on which the progress rested. I said to myself that progress was often attempted in an irrational manner, and

that it was necessary to leave a primitive people and the children of peasants perfectly free to choose the way of progress which they thought best. In reality I was still bent on the solution of the same impossible problem, how to teach without knowing what I had to teach. In the highest sphere of literature I had understood that it was impossible to do this because I had seen that each taught differently, and that the teachers quarrelled among themselves, and scarcely succeeded in concealing their ignorance. Having now to deal with peasants' children, I thought that I could get over this difficulty by allowing the children to learn what they liked. It seems now absurd when I remember the expedients by which I carried out this whim of mine to teach, though I knew in my heart that I could teach nothing useful, because I myself did not know what was necessary.

After a year spent in this employment with the schools, I again went abroad, for the purpose of finding out how I was to teach under these conditions.

I believed that I had found a solution abroad,

and, armed with that conviction, I returned to Russia, the same year in which the peasants were freed from serfdom; and, accepting the office of a country magistrate or arbitrator, I began to teach the uneducated people in the schools, and the educated classes in the journals which I published. Things seemed to be going on well, but I felt that my mind was not in a normal state and that a change was near. I might then, perhaps, have come to that state of absolute despair to which I was brought fifteen years later, if it had not been for a new experience in life which promised me safety — the home life of a family man. For a year I occupied myself with my duties as arbitrator, with the schools, and my newspaper, and got so involved that I was harassed to death; my arbitration was one continual struggle, what to do in the schools became less and less clear, and my newspaper shuffling more and more repugnant to me, always the same thing — trying to teach without knowing how or what — so that I fell ill, more with a mental than physical sickness, gave up everything, and started for the steppes to breathe a fresher air, to

drink mare's milk, and live a mere animal life.

Soon after my return I married. The new circumstances of a happy family life by which I was now surrounded completely led my mind away from the search after the meaning of life as a whole. My life was concentrated in my family, my wife, and children, and consequently in the care for increasing the means of supporting them. The effort to effect my own individual perfection, already replaced by the striving after general progress, was again changed into an effort to secure the particular happiness of my family. In this way fifteen years passed. Notwithstanding that during these fifteen years I looked upon the craft of authorship as a very trifling thing, I continued all the time to write. I had experienced the seductions of authorship, the temptations of an enormous pecuniary reward and of great applause for valueless work, and gave myself up to it as a means of improving my material position, and of stifling all the feelings which led me to question my own life and that of society for the meaning in them. In my

writings I taught what for me was the only truth, that the object of life should be our own happiness and that of our family.

By this rule I lived; but five years ago, a strange state of mind-torpor began at times to grow upon me. I had moments of perplexity, of a stoppage, as it were, of life, as if I did not know how I was to live, what I was to do. I began to wander, and was a victim to low spirits. This, however, passed, and I continued to live as before. Later, these periods of perplexity grew more and more frequent, and invariably took the same form. During their continuance the same questions always presented themselves to me: "Why?" and "What after?"

At first it seemed to me that these were empty and unmeaning questions, that all they asked about was well known, and that whenever I wished to find answers to them I could do so without much trouble — then I had no time for it. But these questions presented themselves to my mind with ever-increasing frequency, demanding an answer with still greater and greater persistence, grouping themselves into one dark and ominous spot. It was with me

as in every case of a hidden, mortal disease — at first the symptoms, as to its position, are slight, and are disregarded by the patient, while later they are repeated more and more frequently, till they end in a period of uninterrupted suffering. The sufferings increase, and the patient, before he has time to seek a remedy, is confronted with the fact that what he took for a mere indisposition has become more important to him than anything else on earth, that he is face to face with death.

This is exactly what happened mentally to myself. I became aware that this was not a mere passing phase of mental ill-health, that the symptoms were of the utmost importance, and that if these questions continued to recur, I must find an answer to them. I tried to answer them. The questions seemed so foolish, so simple, so childish; but no sooner had I begun my attempt to decide them than I was convinced that they were neither childish nor silly, but were concerned with the deepest problems of life, and again that I was, think of them as I would, utterly unable to find an answer to them.

Before occupying myself with my estate, with the education of my son, with the writing of books, I was bound to know why I did these things. Till I know the reasons for my own acts, I can do nothing, I cannot live. While thinking of the details of the management of my household and estate, which in these days occupied much of my time, the following question came into my head: "Well, I have now six thousand 'desatins' in the government of Samara, and three hundred horses — what then?" I was quite disconcerted, and knew not what to think. Another time, dwelling on the thought of how I should educate my children, I asked myself, "*Why?*" Again, when considering by what means the well-being of the people might best be promoted, I suddenly exclaimed, "But what concern have I with it?" When I thought of the fame which my works had gained me, I used to say to myself, "Well, what if I should be more famous than Gogol, Poushkin, Shakespeare, Molière — than all the writers of the world — well, and what then?" I could find no reply. Such questions demand an answer, and an immediate one; without one it is impossible to live, but answer there was none.

IV.

My life had come to a sudden stop. I was able to breathe, to eat, to drink, to sleep. I could not, indeed, help doing so; but there was no real life in me. I had not a single wish to strive for the fulfilment of what I could feel to be reasonable. If I wished for anything, I knew beforehand that, were I to satisfy the wish, nothing would come of it, I should still be dissatisfied. Had a fairy appeared and offered me all I desired, I should not have known what to say. If I seemed to have, at a given moment of excitement, not a wish, but a mood resulting from the tendencies of former wishes, at a calmer moment I knew that it was a delusion, that I really wished for nothing. I could not even wish to know the truth, because I guessed what the truth was.

The truth lay in this, that life had no meaning for me. Every day of life, every step in it, brought me nearer the edge of a precipice,

whence I saw clearly the final ruin before me. To stop, to go back, were alike impossible; nor could I shut my eyes so as not to see the suffering that alone awaited me, the death of all in me, even to annihilation. Thus I, a healthy and a happy man, was brought to feel that I could live no longer, that an irresistible force was dragging me down into the grave. I do not mean that I had an intention of committing suicide. The force that drew me away from life was stronger, fuller, and concerned with far wider consequences than any mere wish; it was a force like that of my previous attachment to life, only in a contrary direction. The idea of suicide came as naturally to me as formerly that of bettering my life. It had so much attraction for me that I was compelled to practise a species of self-deception, in order to avoid carrying it out too hastily. I was unwilling to act hastily, only because I had determined first to clear away the confusion of my thoughts, and, that once done, I could always kill myself. I was happy, yet I hid away a cord, to avoid being tempted to hang myself by it to one of the pegs between the cupboards of my study,

where I undressed alone every evening, and ceased carrying a gun because it offered too easy a way of getting rid of life. I knew not what I wanted; I was afraid of life; I shrank from it, and yet there *was* something I hoped for from it.

Such was the condition I had come to, at a time when all the circumstances of my life were pre-eminently happy ones, and when I had not reached my fiftieth year. I had a good, a loving, and a well-beloved wife, good children, a fine estate, which, without much trouble on my part, continually increased my income; I was more than ever respected by my friends and acquaintances; I was praised by strangers, and could lay claim to having made my name famous without much self-deception. Moreover, my mind was neither deranged nor weakened; on the contrary, I enjoyed a mental and physical strength which I have seldom found in men of my class and pursuits: I could keep up with a peasant in mowing, and could continue mental labor for ten hours at a stretch, without any evil consequences.

The mental state in which I then was seemed

to me summed up in the following: my life was a foolish and wicked joke played upon me by I knew not whom. Notwithstanding my rejection of the idea of a Creator, that of a being who thus wickedly and foolishly made a joke of me seemed to me the most natural of all conclusions, and the one that threw the most light upon my darkness. I instinctively reasoned that this being, wherever he might be, was one who was even then diverting himself at my expense, as he watched me, after from thirty to forty years of a life of study and development, of mental and bodily growth, with all my powers matured and having reached the point at which life as a whole should be best understood, standing like a fool with but one thing clear to me, that there was nothing in life, that there never was anything, and never will be. "To him I must seem ridiculous. . . . But was there, or was there not, such a being?" Neither way could I feel it helped me. I could not attribute reasonable motive to any single act, much less to my whole life. I was only astonished that this had not occurred to me before, from premises

which had so long been known. Illness and death would come (indeed they had come), if not to-day, then to-morrow, to those whom I loved, to myself, and nothing would remain but stench and worms. All my acts, whatever I did, would sooner or later be forgotten, and I myself be nowhere. Why, then, busy one's self with anything? How could men see this, and live? It is possible to live only as long as life intoxicates us; as soon as we are sober again we see that it is all a delusion, and a stupid one! In this, indeed, there is nothing either ludicrous or amusing; it is only cruel and absurd.

There is an old Eastern fable about a traveller in the steppes who is attacked by a furious wild beast. To save himself the traveller gets into a dried-up well; but at the bottom of it, he sees a dragon with its jaws wide-open to devour him. The unhappy man dares not get out for fear of the wild beast, and dares not descend for fear of the dragon, so he catches hold of the branch of a wild plant growing in a crevice of the well. His arms grow tired, and he feels that he must soon perish, death

awaiting him on either side, but he still holds on; and then he sees two mice, one black and one white, gnawing through the trunk of the wild plant, as they gradually and evenly make their way round it. The plant must soon give way, break off, and he will fall into the jaws of the dragon. The traveller sees this, and knows that he must inevitably perish; but, while still hanging, he looks around him, and, finding some drops of honey on the leaves of the wild plant, he stretches out his tongue and licks them.

Thus do I cling to the branch of life, knowing that the dragon of death inevitably awaits me, ready to tear me to pieces, and I cannot understand why such tortures have fallen to my lot. I also strive to suck the honey which once comforted me, but it palls on my palate, while the white mouse and the black, day and night, gnaw through the branch to which I cling. I see the dragon too plainly, and the honey is no longer sweet. I see the dragon, from whom there is no escape, and the mice, and I cannot turn my eyes away from them. It is no fable, but a living, undeniable truth, to

be understood of all men. The former delusion of happiness in life which hid from me the horror of the dragon, no longer deceives me.

However I may reason with myself that I cannot understand the meaning of life, that I must live without thinking, I cannot again begin to do so, because I have done so too long already. I cannot now help seeing that each day and each night, as it passes, brings me nearer to death. I can see but this, because this alone is true — all the rest is a lie. The two drops of honey, which more than anything else drew me away from the cruel truth, my love for my family and for my writings, to which latter I gave the name of art, no longer taste sweet to me. "My family," thought I; "but a family, a wife and children, are also human beings, and subject to the same conditions as myself; they must either be living in a lie, or they must see the terrible truth. Why should they live? Why should I love, care for, bring up, and watch over them? To bring them to the despair which fills myself, or to make dolts of them? As I love them, I cannot conceal from them the truth — every step

they take in knowledge leads them to it, and that truth is death."

But art, then; but poetry? Under the influence of success and flattered by praise, I had long persuaded myself that these were things worth working for, notwithstanding the approach of death, the great destroyer, to annihilate my writings, and the memory of them; but now I soon saw that this was only another delusion, I saw clearly that art is only the ornament and charm of life. Life having lost its charm for me, how could I make others see a charm in it? While I was not living my own life, but one that was external to me, as long as I believed that life had a meaning, though I could not say what it was, life was reflected for me in the poetry and art which I loved, it was pleasant to me to look into the mirror of art; but when I tried to discover the meaning of life, when I felt the necessity of living myself, the mirror became either unnecessary or painful. I could no longer take comfort from what I saw in the mirror — that my position was a stupid and desperate one.

It warmed my heart when I believed that

life had a meaning, when the play of the light on the glass showed me all that was comic, tragic, touching, beautiful, and terrible in life, and comforted me; but when I knew that life had no meaning at all, and was only terrible, the play of the light no longer amused me. No honey could be sweet upon my tongue when I saw the dragon, and the mice eating away the stay which supported me. Nor was that all. Had I simply come to know that life has no meaning, I might have quietly accepted it as my allotted portion. I could not, however, remain thus unmoved. Had I been like a man in a wood, out of which he knows that there is no issue, I could have lived on; but I was like a man lost in a wood, and who, terrified by the thought, rushes about trying to find a way out, and, though he knows each step can only lead him farther astray, cannot help running backwards and forwards.

It was this that was terrible, this which to get free from I was ready to kill myself. I felt a horror of what awaited me; I knew that this horror was more terrible than the position itself, but I could not patiently await the end.

However persuasive the argument might be that all the same something in the heart or elsewhere would burst and all be over, still I could not patiently await the end. The horror of the darkness was too great to bear, and I longed to free myself from it by a rope or a pistol ball. (This was the feeling that, above all, drew me to think of suicide.)

V.

It was possible, however, that I had overlooked something, that I had failed to understand something, and I often asked myself, if such a state of utter despair could be, what man was born to. I sought an explanation of the questions which tormented me in every branch of human knowledge; I sought that explanation painfully and long, not out of mere curiosity nor apathetically, but obstinately day and night; I sought it as a perishing man seeks safety, and I found nothing. My search not only failed, but I convinced myself that all those who had searched like myself had failed also, and come like me to the despairing conviction that the only absolute knowledge man can possess is this — that life is without a meaning. I sought in all directions, and, thanks to a life of study, and also to the footing which I had gained in learned society, all the sources of knowledge were open to me, not

merely through books, but through personal intercourse. I had the advantage of all that learning could answer to the question, "What is life?"

It was long before I could believe that human learning had no clear answer whatever to this question. It seemed to me, when I considered the importance which science attributed to so many theories unconnected with the problem of life, and the serious tone which pervaded her inquiries into them, that I must have misunderstood something. For a long time I was too timid to oppose the learning of the day, and I fancied that the insufficiency of the answers which I received was not its fault, but was owing to my own gross ignorance; but this thing was not a joke to pass the time with me, but the business of my life, and I was at last forced to the conclusion that these questions were just and necessary ones underlying all knowledge, and that it was not I that was in fault in putting them, but science in pretending to have an answer to them.

The question, which in my fiftieth year had brought me very close to suicide, was the sim-

plest of all questions, one to make itself heard in the heart of every man from undeveloped childhood to wisest old age; a question without which, as I had myself experienced, life became impossible.

That question was as follows: "What result will there be from what I am doing now, and may do to-morrow? what will be the issue of my life?" Otherwise expressed, it may run: "Why should I live? why should I wish for anything? why should I do anything?" Again, in other words it is: "Is there any meaning in my life which can overcome the inevitable death awaiting me?"

To this question, one and the same though variously expressed, I sought an answer in human knowledge, and I found that with respect to this question all human knowledge may be divided into two opposite hemispheres, with their respective poles, the one negative, the other affirmative, but that at neither end is to be found an answer to the problem of life. One system of knowledge seems to deny that there is such a question, but, on the other hand, has a clear and exact answer to all its

own independent inquiries: it is the system of experimental science, at the extreme end of which is mathematics. Another system accepts the question, but does not answer it; it is that of theoretic philosophy, and at its extremity is metaphysics. I had been addicted from my youth to theoretical study; later, mathematics and the exact sciences had attracted me; and till I came to put clearly to myself this question as to the meaning of life, until it grew up in me, as it were, of itself, and till I felt that it demanded an immediate answer, I was content with the artificial and conventional answers given by learning.

For the practical side of life I used to say to myself, "All is development and differentiation, all tends to complication and perfection, and there are laws which govern this process. You are yourself a part of the whole. Learn as much as possible of this whole, and learn the law of its development; you will then know your own place in the great unity, and know yourself as well." Though I feel shame in confessing it, I must needs own that there was a time when I was myself developing — when

my muscles and memory were strengthening, my power of thinking and understanding on the increase — that I, feeling this, very naturally thought that the law of my own growth was the law of the universe and explained the meaning of my own life. But there came another time when I had ceased to grow, and I felt that I was not developing but drying up; my muscles grew weaker, my teeth began to fall out, and I saw that this law of growth not only explained nothing but that such a law did not and could not exist; that I had taken for a general law what only affected myself at a given age.

On looking more closely into the nature of this pretended law, it was clear to me that there could be no law of eternal development; that to say everything in infinite space and time is developed, complicated, differentiated, and perfected, is to talk nonsense. Such words have no meaning, for the infinite can know nothing of simple and compound, of past and future, of better and worse. It was a personal question that was of such importance to me, and which remained without an answer:

"What am I myself with all my desires?" I understood that the acquirement of knowledge was interesting and attractive, but that it could only give clear and exact results in proportion to its inapplicability to the question of life. The less it had to do with these questions, the clearer and more exact it was; the more it took the character of a solution of these questions, the obscurer and less attractive they became. If we turn to those branches of knowledge in which men have tried to find a solution to the problem of life, to physiology, psychology, biology, sociology, we meet with a striking poverty of thought, with the greatest obscurity, with an utterly unjustifiable pretension to decide questions beyond their competence, and a constant contradiction of one thinker by another, and even by himself. If we turn to the branches of knowledge which are not concerned with the problem of life, but find an answer to their own particular scientific questions, we are lost in admiration of man's mental powers; but we know beforehand that we shall get no answer to our questions about life itself, for these branches

of knowledge directly ignore all questions concerning it.

Those who profess them say, "We cannot tell you what you are and why you live; such questions we do not study. But if you wish to know the laws of light, of chemical affinities, of the development of organisms; if you wish to know the laws that govern different bodies, their form, and relations to number and size; if you wish to know the laws of your own mind, we can give you clear, exact, and absolutely certain answers on every point." The relation of experimental science to the question of the meaning of life may be put as follows: Question, "Why do I live?" Answer, "Infinitely small particles, in infinite combinations, in endless space and endless time, eternally change their forms, and when you have learned the laws of these changes, you will know why you live." I used to say to myself when theorizing, "Spiritual causes lie at the root of man's life and development, and they are the ideals which govern him. These ideals find expression in religion, in science, in art, and in the forms of government, and rise higher, from one stage to

another, till man at last reaches his highest good. I am myself a man, and am therefore called upon to assist in making the ideals of humanity known and accepted."

In the days of my mental weakness this reasoning sufficed for me; but as soon as the problem of life really, as it were, arose within me, the whole theory fell to pieces at once. Not to speak of the dishonest inaccuracy, by which learning of this kind is made to give as general results those due to the study of but a small part of mankind; not to speak of the many contradictions among the various champions of this theory, as to what are the ideals of humanity; the strangeness, if it be not the silliness, of this way of thinking is that, in order to answer the question which occurs to every man — "What am I?" or "Why do I live?" or "What am I to do?" — we must first answer this other question: "What is the life of that unknown quantity to us, mankind, of which we are acquainted with but one minute part in one minute period of time?"

In order to understand what he is himself, a man must first know what that mysterious

humanity is, which is formed of other men like himself, and who again are ignorant of what they are.

I confess there was a time when I believed this. That was when I had my own cherished ideals which determined my caprices, and I would strive to evolve a theory which should enable me to look upon my fancies as a law belonging to humanity. As soon, however, as the question of the meaning of life made itself clearly felt within me, my theoretical answer was forever confuted. I understood that, as in the experimental sciences there are real sciences, and semi-sciences which pretend to give answers to questions beyond their competence, so in the province of theoretical knowledge is there a wide range of highly cultivated philosophy which attempts to do the same. The semi-sciences of this division, jurisprudence and historical sociology, endeavor to decide the questions concerning man and his life, by deciding, each in his own way, another question, that of the life of humanity as a whole.

But, as in the sphere of exact science, a man who earnestly seeks an answer to the question,

"How am I to live?" cannot content himself with the answer that if he studies in infinite space and time the endless combinations and changes of infinite particles, he will know what his own life means, so a sincere man cannot be satisfied with this other answer, "Study the life of humanity as a whole, and then, though we know neither its beginning nor its end, and are ignorant of its parts, you will know what your life means."

It is the same with these sham sciences as with the sham experimental ones; they contain obscurity, inaccuracy, stupidity, and contradiction, exactly in proportion to their divergence from their proper sphere. The problem of exact science is the succession of cause and effect in material phenomena. If exact science raises the question of a finite cause, it stumbles against an absurdity. The problem of theoretical science is the conception of the uncaused existence of life. Directly the question of the cause of phenomena is raised — as, for instance, of social and historical phenomena — theoretical science lands also in an absurdity. Experimental science gives positive results, and shows

the grandeur of man's intellect, only when it does not inquire into finite causes; while, on the contrary, theoretical science only shows the greatness of man's mental powers, is only a science at all, when it gets rid altogether of the succession of phenomena, and looks upon man only in relation to finite causes. Such in this department of science is the office of its most important branch, — of the one which is the pole, as it were, of all the others, — of metaphysics or philosophy.

This science puts the clear question, "What am I, and what is the whole world around me? Why do I and the world exist?" and it has always answered it in the same way. Whatever name the philosopher may give to the principle of life existing in me and in all other living beings, whether he call it an idea, a substance, a spirit, or a will, he still says ever that it is a reality, and that I have a real existence; but why this is so he does not know, and does not try to explain if he is an exact thinker.

I ask, "Why should this reality be? What comes of the fact that it is and will be?" Philosophy cannot answer, it can only itself put

the same question. If it be, then, a true philosophy, its whole labor consists in this, that it should put this question clearly. If it keep firmly to its proper sphere, it can only answer the question, "What am I and the whole world around me?" by saying, "All and nothing," and to that other question, "Why?" by adding, "I do not know." Thus, however I examine and twist the theoretical replies of philosophy, I never receive an answer to my question; and that, not as in the sphere of experimental knowledge, because the answer does not relate to the question, but because here, although great mental labor has been applied directly to the question, there *is* no answer, and instead of one I get back my own question repeated in a more complicated form.

VI.

In my search for a solution of the problem of life I experienced the same feeling as a man who has lost himself in a wood. He comes to an open plain, climbs up a tree, and sees around him a space without end, but nowhere a house — he sees clearly that there can be none; he goes into the thick of the wood, into the darkness, and sees darkness, but again no house. Thus had I lost my way in the wood of human knowledge, in the twilight of mathematical and experimental science, which opened out for me a clear and distant horizon in the direction of which there could be no house, and in the darkness of philosophy, plunging me into a greater gloom with every step I took, until I was at last persuaded that there was, and could be, no issue. When I followed what seemed the bright light of learning, I saw that I had only turned aside from the real question. Notwithstanding the attraction of the distant horizon unfolded

so clearly before me, notwithstanding the charm of losing myself in the infinity of knowledge, I saw that the clearer it was the less was it needed by me, the less did it give me an answer to my question.

I said to myself, "I know now all that science so obstinately seeks to learn; but an answer to my question as to the meaning of my life is not to be obtained from science." I saw that philosophy, notwithstanding that, or perhaps because an answer to my question had become the direct object of its inquiries, gave no answer but the one I had given to myself, "What is the meaning of my life? It has none. Or what will come of my life? Nothing. Or why does all that is exist, and why do I exist? Because it does exist." When I turned to one branch of science, I obtained an endless number of exact answers to questions I had not proposed: about the chemical elements of the stars and planets, about the movement of the sun with the constellation of Hercules, on the origin of species and of man, about the infinitely small and weightless particles of ether; but the only

answer to my question as to the meaning of my life was this, "You are what you call life; that is, a temporary and accidental agglomeration of particles. The mutual action and reaction of these particles on each other has produced what you call your life. This agglomeration will continue during a certain time, then the reciprocal action of these particles will cease, and with it ends what you call your life and all your questions as well. You are an accidentally combined lump of something. The lump undergoes decomposition, this decomposition men call life; the lump falls asunder, decomposition ceases, and with it all doubting." This is the answer from the clear and positive side of human knowledge, and if true to its own principles it can give no other.

Such an answer, however, is no answer to the question at all. I want to know the meaning of my life; and that it is an infinite particle not only does not give a meaning to it, but destroys the possibility of a meaning. The compromise which experimental makes with theoretical science, when it is said that the meaning of life is development, and the efforts

made towards its attainment, from its obscurity and inaccuracy cannot be considered an answer. The theoretical side of human knowledge, when it keeps firmly to its own principles, through all time has ever answered and still answers one and the same, "The world is something which is eternal and not to be understood. The life of man is an inconceivable part of this inconceivable whole."

Again I set aside all the compromises between theoretical and experimental science which are the product of the sham sciences, of so-called jurisprudence, of political economy, and of history. In these sciences we have again a false conception of development and perfection, with this difference, that formerly it was a development of everything, and now it is a development of human life. The inaccuracy is again the same; development and perfection in infinity can have no object, no direction, and therefore can give no answer to my question. Whenever theoretical knowledge is exact, where philosophy is true to itself, and does not simply serve, like what Schopenhauer calls "professorial philosophy," to divide all

existing phenomena into new columns, and give to them new names — wherever the philosopher does not overlook the great question of all, the answer is always the same, the answer given by Socrates, Schopenhauer, Solomon, and Buddha. "We approach truth only in the proportion as we are farther from life," said Socrates, when preparing to die. (What do we who love truth seek in life? In order to be free from the body and all the ills that accompany life in it. If so, then, how shall we not be glad of the approach of death?) (A wise man seeks death all his life, and death has no terrors for him.) This is what Schopenhauer says: "Accept will as the ultimate principle of the universe, and in all phenomena, from the unconscious tendencies of the unknown forces of nature to the conscious activity of man, acknowledge only the objectivity of that will, and we still cannot get rid of this logical consequence, that directly that will uses its freedom to abdicate, to deny and destroy itself, all phenomena disappear with it, there is an end to the constant efforts and impulses now going on, without aim and

without intermission, in every degree of the objectivity in which and through which the universe exists, there is an end to the varieties of successive forms, and with form vanish its postulates, space and time, even to the last and fundamental elements of form, the subject and the object. If there is no will, no phenomenal appearance, then there is no universe. The only thing that remains to us is nothing. But this passage to annihilation is opposed by our own nature, by our will to live, which causes our own existence and that of the universe. That we so fear annihilation, or, what is the same, that we so wish to live, only shows that we ourselves are nothing but that wish, and know nothing beyond it. Consequently, what remains to us after the annihilation of will, except will again, is assuredly nothing; on the other hand, for those in whom will has destroyed itself, the whole of this material universe of ours, with all its suns and its milky ways — *is nothing.*"

"Vanity of vanities," says Solomon, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under

the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever. . . . The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

"I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. . . . I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I

gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

"I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine (yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom), and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of

the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not mine heart from any joy. . . . Then I looked on all the works my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

"And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly. . . . And I myself perceive also that one event happeneth to them all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool forever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

"Therefore I hated life; because the work

that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yea, I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. . . . For what hath man of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath labored under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity. There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. . . .

"All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

"For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun."

Thus speaks Solomon, or the one who wrote the above; and this is what an Indian sage says: "Sakya Muni, the young and happy heir to a great throne, from whom had been kept the sight of illness, old age, and death, once while out driving saw a horrible-looking, toothless old man. The prince was much astonished, and asked the driver what it meant, and why the man was in such a pitiable and disgusting state. When he learned that this was the common lot of all men, and that he himself, prince and young though he was, must inevitably one day be the same, he was unable to continue his drive, and ordered the carriage to be driven home, that he might have time to think it all over. He shut himself up alone and

thought it over. He probably thought of something which consoled him, for again he got into his carriage and drove off merry and happy. This time he is met by a sick man. He sees a worn-out, tottering man, who is quite blue in the face and has dim eyes. The prince stopped and asked what it was. When he was told that it was illness, that old men are subject to it, and he himself, young and happy prince though he was, might fall ill the next day, he again lost all desire for amusement, and gave orders to drive home. There he again sought peace of mind, and probably found it, for soon after he started again, for the third time, in his carriage. This time, however, he saw something new also — some men were carrying something by. 'What is that?' 'A dead body.' 'What does a dead body mean?' asks the prince; and he is told that to become one means to become what the man before him now is. The prince descends and approaches the body, uncovers it, and looks at it. 'What will become of him?' asks the prince. He is told that the body will be thrust into a hole dug in the earth. 'Why?'

'Because he will never be alive again, and only stench and worms can come from him.' 'And that is the lot of all men? And it will be so with me? I shall be put underground to stink and have worms come from me?' 'Yes.' 'Back! I will not go for the drive, and never will go again.'"

So Sakya Muni could find no comfort in life, and he decided that life was a very great evil, and applied all his energies to freeing himself and others from it, so that after death, life should in no way be renewed, and the very root of life should be destroyed. Thus speak all the Indian sages. Here we have the only direct answers which human wisdom can give to the problem of life. "The life of the body is evil and a lie, and so the annihilation of that life is a good for which we ought to wish," says Socrates.

Life is what it ought not to be; "an evil, and a passage from it into nothingness is the only good in life," says Schopenhauer. Everything in the world, both folly and wisdom, both riches and poverty, rejoicing and grief, all is vanity and worthless. Man dies and nothing

is left of him, and this again is vanity, says Solomon.

"To live, knowing that sufferings, illness, old age, and death are inevitable, is not possible; we must get rid of life, get rid of the possibility of living," says Buddha.

And what these powerful minds have said, what millions on millions of men have thought and felt, has been thought and felt by me.

Thus my wanderings over the fields of knowledge not only failed to cure me of my despair, but increased it. One branch of knowledge gave no answer at all to the problem of life, another gave a direct answer which confirmed my despair, and showed that the state to which I had come was not the result of my going astray, of any mental disorder, but, on the contrary, of my thinking rightly, of my being in agreement with the conclusions of the most powerful intellects among mankind.

I could not be deceived. All was vanity. A misfortune to be born. Death was better than life, and life's burden must be got rid of.

"Bitter is the day of one's death than the day of one's birth." Solomon

VII.

Having failed to find an explanation in knowledge, I began to seek it in life itself, hoping to find it in the men who surrounded me; and I began to watch men like myself, to observe how they lived, and how they practically treated the question which had brought me to despair.

And this is what I found among those of the same social position and culture as myself.

I found that for those who occupied the same position as myself there were four means of escape from the terrible state in which we all were.

The first means of escape is through ignorance. It consists in not perceiving and understanding that life is an evil and an absurdity. People of this class — for the greater part women, or men who are either very young or very stupid — have not understood the problem of life as it presented itself to Schopenhauer,

to Solomon, and to Buddha.) They see neither the dragon awaiting them, nor the mice eating through the plant to which they cling, and they taste the drops of honey.) But they only lick the honey for a time; something directs their attention to the dragon and the mice, and there is an end to their tasting.) (From these I could learn nothing: (we cannot unknow what we do know.)

(The second means of escape is the Epicurean. It consists in, while we know the hopelessness of life, taking advantage of every good there is in it, in avoiding the sight of the dragon and mice, and in seeking the honey as best we can, especially wherever there is most of it. (Solomon points out this issue from the difficulty thus: "Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labor the days of his life, which God giveth him, under the sun. . . . Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. . . . Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity,

which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Such is the way in which most people, who belong to the circle in which I move, reconcile themselves to their fate, and make living possible. They know more of the good than the evil of life from the circumstances of their position, and their blunted moral perceptions enable them to forget that all their advantages are accidental, and that all men cannot have harems and palaces, like Solomon; that for one man who has a thousand wives, there are thousands of men who have none, and for each palace there must be thousands of men to build it with the sweat of their brow, and that the same chance which has made me a Solomon to-day may make me Solomon's slave to-morrow. The dulness of their imagination enables these men to forget what destroyed the peace of Buddha, the inevitable sickness, old age, and

death, which if not to-day, then to-morrow, must be the end of all their pleasures.

Thus think and feel the majority of the men of our time of the upper classes. That some of them call their dulness of thought and imagination by the name of positive philosophy, does not, in my opinion, separate them from those who, in order not to see the real question, search for and lick the honey. I could not imitate such as these; my imagination not being blunted like theirs, I could not artificially prevent its action. Like every man who who really lives, I could not turn my eyes aside from the mice and the dragon, when I had once seen them.

The third means of escape is through strength and energy of character. It consists in destroying life when we have perceived that it is an evil and an absurdity. Only men of strong and unswerving character act thus. Understanding all the stupidity of the joke that is played with us, and understanding far better the happiness of the dead than of the living, they put an end at once to the parody of life, and bless any means of doing it — a

rope round the neck, water, a knife in the heart, or a railway train. The number of those in my own class who thus act continually increases, and those who do this are generally in the prime of life, with their physical strength matured and unweakened, and with but few of the habits that undermine man's intellectual powers yet formed. I saw that this means of escape was the worthiest, and wished to make use of it.

The fourth means of escape is through weakness. It consists, though the evil and absurdity of life are well known, in continuing to drag on, though aware that nothing can come of it. People of this class of mind know that death is better than life, but have not the strength of character to act as their reason dictates, to have done with deceit and kill themselves; they seem to be waiting for something to happen. This way of escape is due solely to weakness, for if I know what is better, and it is within my reach, why not seize it? To this class of men I myself belonged.

Thus do those of my own class, in four different ways, save themselves from a terrible con-

tradiction. With the most earnest intellectual efforts I could not find a fifth way. One way is to ignore life's being a meaningless jumble of vanity and evil, — not to know that it is better not to live. For me not to know this was impossible, and when I once saw the truth, I could not shut my eyes to it. Another way is to make the best of life as it is without thinking of the future. This, again, I could not do. I, like Sakya Muni, could not drive to the pleasure-ground, when I knew of the existence of old age, suffering, and death. My imagination was too lively for that. Moreover, my heart was ungladdened by the passing joys which fell for a few rare instants to my lot. The third way is, knowing that life is an evil and a foolish thing, to put an end to it, to kill one's self. I understood this, but still did not kill myself. The fourth way is to accept life as described by Solomon and Schopenhauer, to know that it is a stupid and ridiculous joke, and yet live on, to wash, dress, dine, talk, and even write books. This position was painful and disgusting to me, but I remained in it.

I now see that I did not kill myself because

I had, in a confused sort of way, an inkling that my ideas were wrong. However persuasive and unanswerable the idea, which I shared with the wisest on earth, that life has no meaning, appeared to me, I still felt a confused doubt in the truth of my conclusions, which formed itself thus: "My reason tells me that life is contrary to reason. If there is nothing higher than reason (and there is nothing), reason is the creator of my life; were there no reason, there would be no life for me. How can it be that reason denies life, and is at the same time its creator? Again, from the other side, if there were no life, I should have no reason, consequently reason is born of life, and life is all. Reason is the product of life, and yet it denies life." I felt that something here was wrong. I said to myself: "Life undoubtedly has no meaning, and is evil, but I have lived and am still alive, and so also have lived and are living the whole human race. How is it, then? Why do all men live, when all men are able to die? Is it that I and Schopenhauer alone are wise enough to have understood the unmeaning emptiness and evil of life?"

To see the inanity of life is a simple matter enough, and it has long been apparent to the simplest among us, but men still live on. Yes, men live on, and never think of calling in question the reasonableness of life!

My acquired knowledge, confirmed by the wisdom of the wisest of the world, showed me that everything on earth, organic or inorganic, was arranged with extraordinary wisdom, and that my own position alone was a foolish one. But, all the same, the enormous masses of those fools, my fellow-men, know nothing of the organic or inorganic structure of the world, but live on, and it seems to them that their lives are subjected to perfectly reasonable conditions!

Then I thought to myself: "But what if there be something more for me to know? Surely this is the way in which ignorance acts. Why, it always says exactly what I do now! What men are ignorant of they say is stupid. It really comes to this, that mankind as a whole have always lived, and are living, as if they understood the meaning of life, for not doing so they could not live at all, and yet I say that

all this life has no meaning in it, and that I cannot live."

Nobody prevents our denial of life by suicide, but, then, kill yourself and you will no longer argue about it. If you dislike life, kill yourself. If in your life you cannot find a reason for it, put an end to it, and do not go on talking and writing about being unable to understand life. You have got into a gay company, in which all are well satisfied, all know what they are doing, and you alone are wearied and repelled; then get out of it!

And after all, then, what are we who, persuaded of the necessity of suicide, still cannot bring ourselves to the act, but weak, inconsistent men, — to speak more plainly, stupid men, who carry about with them their stupidity, as the fool carries his name written upon his cap?

Our wisdom, indeed, however firmly it be grounded on truth, has not imparted to us a knowledge of the meaning of life, yet all the millions that share in the life of humanity do not doubt that life has a meaning.

It is certainly true that, from the far-distant time when that life began of which even I

know something, men lived who, though they knew what proved to me that life had no meaning, the argument of its inanity, still lived on, and gave to life a meaning of their own. Since any sort of life began for men, they have had some conception of their own about it, and have so lived down to my own time. All that is in and around me, physical or immaterial, it is all the fruit of their knowledge of life. The very mental instruments which I have employed against that life, to condemn it, were fashioned, not by me, but by them. I was born, and bred, and have grown up, thanks to them. They dug out the iron, taught how to hew down the forests, to tame the cows and the horses, to sow corn, to live one with another; they gave order and form to our life; moreover, they taught me how to think and how to speak. And I, the work of their hands, their foster-child, the pupil of their thoughts and sayings, have proved to them they themselves had no meaning! "There must be something here," said I, "that is wrong. I have made some mistake." I could not, however, discover where the mistake lay.

VIII.

All these doubts, which I am now able to express more or less clearly, I could not have then explained. I then only felt that, despite the logical certainty of my conclusions as to the inanity of life, and confirmed as they were by the greatest thinkers, there was something wrong in them. Whether in the conclusion itself, or in the way of putting the question, I did not know; I only felt that, though my reason was entirely convinced, that was not enough. All my reasoning could not induce me to act in accordance with my convictions, *i. e.*, to kill myself. I should not speak the truth, if I said that my reason alone brought me to the position in which I was. Reason had been at work no doubt, but something else had worked too, something which I can only call an instinctive consciousness of life. There also worked in me a force, which determined my attention to one thing rather than to another, and

it was this that drew me out of my desperate position, and completely changed the current of my thoughts. This force led me to the idea that I, with thousands of other men like me, did not form the whole of mankind, — that I was still ignorant of what human life was.

When I watched the restricted circle of those who were my equals in social position, I saw only people who did not understand the question, people who kept down their understanding of it by the excitement of life, people who understood it and put an end to life, and people who, understanding, lived on through weakness, in despair. And I saw no others. It seemed to me that the small circle of learned, rich, and idle people, to which I myself belonged, formed the whole of humanity, and that the millions living outside it were animals, not men.

However strange, improbable, and inconceivable it now seems to me, that I, reasoning about life, could overlook the life of mankind surrounding me on all sides, and fall into such an error as to think that the life of a Solomon, a Schopenhauer, and my own, was alone real

and fit, and the life lived by unconsidered millions, a circumstance unworthy of attention — however strange this appears to me now, I see that it was so then. Led away by intellectual pride, it seemed to me not to be doubted that I, with Solomon and Schopenhauer, had put the question so exactly and truly that there could be no other form of it; it seemed unquestionable that all these millions of men had failed to conceive the depth of the question, that I had sought the meaning of my life; and it never once occurred to me to think, "But what meaning has been given, what meaning is given now, by the millions of those who have lived and are living on earth?"

I long lived in this state of mental aberration, which, though its theories are not always openly professed, is not the less common among those who are supposed to be the most learned and most liberal part of society. But whether, thanks to my strange kind of instinctive affection for the laboring classes, which impelled me to understand them, and to see that they are not so stupid as we think, or thanks to the sincerity of my conviction that I could know

nothing beyond the advisability of hanging myself, I felt that, if I wished to live and understand the meaning of life, I must seek it not amongst those who have lost their grasp on it, and wish to kill themselves, but among the millions of the living and the dead, who have made our life what it is, and on whom now rests the burden of our life and their own.

So I watched the life common to such enormous numbers of the dead and the living, the life of simple, unlearned, and poor men, and found something quite different. I saw that all these millions, with rare exceptions, did not come under any division of the classification which I had made; I could not count them among those who do not understand the question, because they not only put it but answer it very clearly; to count them among the Epicureans I was also unable, because their life has far more of privation and suffering than of enjoyment; to count them amongst those who, against their reason, live through a life without meaning, was still less possible, because every act of their lives, and death itself, is explained by them. Self-murder they look upon as the

greatest of evils. It appeared that throughout mankind there was a sense given to the meaning of life which I had neglected and despised. It came to this, that the knowledge based on reason denied a meaning to life, and declined to make it a subject of inquiry, while the meaning given by the millions that form the great whole of humanity was founded on a despised and fallacious knowledge.

The knowledge based on reason, the knowledge of the learned and the wise, denies a meaning in life, and the great mass of all the rest of mankind have an unreasoning consciousness of life which gives a meaning to it.

This unreasoning knowledge is the faith which I could not but reject. This is God, one and yet three; this is the creation in six days, the devils and the angels; and all that I cannot, while I keep my senses, understand. My position was a terrible one. I knew that from the knowledge which reason has given man, I could get nothing but the denial of life, and from faith nothing but the denial of reason, which last was even more impossible than the denial of life. The result of the former was that life

is an evil and that men know it to be one, that men may cease to live if they will, but that they always go on living — I myself lived on, though I had long known that life had no sense nor good in it. The result of the latter was that, in order to understand the meaning of life, I must abandon the guide without which there can be no meaning in anything, my reason itself.

IX.

I WAS stopped by a contradiction which could only be explained in two ways: either what I called reasonable was not so reasonable as I thought it, or what I called unreasonable was not so unreasonable as I thought it. I began by verifying the process of thinking through which I had been led to the conclusions of reasoning knowledge.

On doing this I found the process complete without a flaw. The conclusion that life was nothing was inevitable; but I discovered a mistake. The mistake was that I had not confined my thoughts to the question proposed. The question was, why should I live, *i. e.*, what of real and imperishable will come of my shadowy and perishable life — what meaning has my finite existence in the infinite universe? And I had tried to answer this by studying life.

It was evident that the decision of any number of questions concerning life could not sat-

isfy me, because my question, however simple it seemed at first, included the necessity of explaining infinity by infinity, and the contrary. I asked myself what meaning my life had apart from time, causation, and space. After long and earnest efforts of thinking, I could only answer — none at all.

Through all my reasoning with myself I constantly compared, and I could not do otherwise, the finite with the finite, and the infinite with the infinite, and the conclusion was consequently inevitable: a force is a force, matter is matter, will is will, infinity is infinity, nothing is nothing — and beyond that there was no result. It was like what happens in mathematics, when instead of an equation to resolve we get identical terms. The process of solution is correct, but our answer is $a = a$, $x = x$, or $0 = 0$. This happened to me in my inquiries into the meaning of my life. The answers given by science to the question were all "identity."

Strict scientific inquiry, like that carried on by Descartes, begins undoubtedly with a doubt of everything, throws aside all knowledge founded on belief, and reconstructs all in accord-

ance with the laws of reason and experience, while it can give but one answer to the question about the meaning of life, the one which I myself obtained — an indefinite one. It seemed to me at first that science did give a positive answer, the answer of Schopenhauer: life has no meaning, it is an evil; but, when I inquired more closely into the matter, I perceived that the answer was not positive, that it was my own feeling alone made me think it so. The answer is expressed in the same terms as is that of the Brahmins, of Solomon, and of Schopenhauer, and is only an indefinite one, — the identity of 0 and 0, life is nothing. This philosophical knowledge denies nothing, but answers that the question cannot be decided by it, — that the matter remains indefinite.

When I had come to this conclusion, I understood that it was useless to seek an answer to my question from scientific knowledge, because the latter only shows that no answer can be obtained till the question is put differently, — till the question be made to include the relation between the finite and the infinite. I also understood that, however unreasonable and mon-

strous the answers given by faith, they do bring in the relation of the finite to the infinite.

However the question, How am I to live? be put, the same answer is obtained — by the law of God. Will anything real and positive come of my life, and what? Eternal torment, or eternal bliss. Is there a meaning in life not to be destroyed by death, and, if so, what? Union with an infinite God, paradise.

In this way I was compelled to admit that, besides the reasoning knowledge, which I once thought the only true knowledge, there was in every living man another kind of knowledge, an unreasoning one, but which gives a possibility of living — (faith.) Christ.

All the unreasonableness of faith remained for me the same as ever, but I could not but confess that faith alone gave man an answer as to the meaning of life, and the consequent possibility of living.

When scientific reasoning brought me to the conclusion that my life had no meaning, life stood still in me, and I wished to end it. When I looked at the men around me, at humanity as a whole, I saw that men did live, and that they

affirmed their knowledge as to the meaning of life. For other men, as for myself, faith gave a possibility of living and a meaning to life.

On examining life in other countries than my own, as well among my contemporaries as among those who have passed away, I found it but one and the same. From the beginning of the human race, wherever there is life there is the faith which makes life possible, and everywhere the leading characteristics of that faith are the same.

Whatever answers any kind of faith ever gives to any one, every one of these answers clothes with infinity the finite existence of man, gives a meaning to life which triumphs over suffering, privation, and death. In faith, therefore, alone is found a possibility of living and a meaning in life. What is this faith? I understood that faith is not only the apprehension of things unseen, is not only a revelation (that is only a definition of one of the signs of faith), is not the relation of man to God (faith must first be determined, and then God, and not faith through God), and is not, as it has so often been understood, acquiescence — faith is the

knowledge of the meaning of man's life, through which man does not destroy himself, but lives. Faith is the force of life.

If a man lives, he believes in something. If he did not believe that there was something to live for, he would not live. If he does not see and understand the unreality of the finite, he believes in the finite; if he sees that unreality, he must believe in the infinite. Without faith there is no life.

I then went back upon all the past stages of my mental state, and was terrified. It was now clear to me that for any one to live it was necessary for him either to be ignorant of infinity or to accept an explanation of the meaning of life which should equalize the finite and the infinite. Such an explanation I had, but I had no need of it while I believed in the finite, and I began to apply to my explanation the tests of reason, and in the light of the latter all former explanations were shown to be worthless. But the time when I ceased to believe in the finite passed, and I tried to raise my mental structure on the foundation that I knew an explanation which gave a meaning to life, but I

tried in vain. Like so many of the greatest minds of earth, I came only to the conclusion that $0 = 0$, and, though nothing else could have come of it, I was much astonished to have obtained such an answer to my problem.

What did I do when I sought an answer in the study of experimental science? I wanted to know why I lived, and to that end I studied everything outside myself. Clearly in this way I might learn much, but nothing of that which I needed.

What did I do when I sought an answer in the study of philosophy? I studied the thoughts of others in the same position as myself, and who had no answer to the question — what is life? Clearly I could in this way learn nothing but what I myself knew, namely, that it was impossible to know anything.

What am I? — a part of the infinite whole. In those few words lay the whole problem.

Could it be that men had only now begun to put this question to themselves? Could it be that no one before myself had asked this simple question, that must occur even to the mind of an intelligent child?

Since man has been on earth this question has to a certainty been put, and to a certainty it has been understood that the decision of this question is equally unsatisfactory, whether the finite be compared with the finite, and the infinite with the infinite, or the solution sought and expressed in the relation of the finite to the infinite.

All these conceptions of the equality of the finite and the infinite, through which we receive the ideas of life, of God, of freedom, of good, when we submit them to logical analysis, will not bear the tests of reason.

If it were not so terrible, it would be laughable to think of the pride and self-confidence with which we, like children, pull out our watches, take away the spring, make a plaything of them, and are then astonished that they will no longer keep time.

The decision of the contradiction between the finite and the infinite, and such an answer to the question of what is life as shall enable us to live, is wanted by and is dear to us. The only answer is the one to be found everywhere, always, and among all nations, an answer

which has come down to us from the times in which the origin of human life is lost, an answer so difficult that we could never ourselves have come to it — this answer we in our careless indifference get rid of, by again raising the question which presents itself to every one, but which no one can answer.

The conception of an infinite God, of the divinity of the soul, of the way in which the affairs of men are related to God, of the unity and reality of the spirit, man's conception of moral good and evil, these are conceptions worked out through the infinite mental labors of mankind; conceptions without which there would be no life, without which I should not myself exist, and yet I dare to reject the labors of the whole human race, and to venture on working out the problem again in my own way alone.

I did not at the time think so, but the germs of these thoughts were already within me. I understood (1) that the position assumed by Schopenhauer, Solomon, and myself, with all our wisdom, was a foolish one: we understand that life is an evil, and yet we live. This

clearly is foolish, because if life is foolish, and I care so much for reason, life should be put an end to, and then there would be no one to deny it. (2) I understood that all our arguments turned in a charmed circle, like a cog-wheel the teeth of which no longer catch in another. However much and however well we reason, we get no answer to our question, it will always be $0 = 0$, and consequently our method is probably wrong. (3) I began to understand that in the answers given by faith Christ was to be found the deepest source of human wisdom, that I had no reasonable right to reject them, and that they alone solved the problem of life.

X.

I UNDERSTOOD what I have just stated, but my heart was none the lighter for it.

I was now ready to accept any faith that did not require of me a direct denial of reason, for that would be to act a lie; and I studied the books of the Buddhists and the Mahometans, and especially also Christianity, both in its writings and in the lives of its professors around me.

I naturally turned my attention at first to the believers in my own immediate circle, to learned men, to orthodox divines, to the elders among the monks, to the teachers of a new shade of doctrine, the so-called New Christians, who preach salvation through faith in a Redeemer. I seized upon these believers, and demanded from them what they believed in, and what for them gave a meaning to life.

Notwithstanding that I made every possible concession, that I avoided all disputes, I could

not accept the faith of these men. I saw that what they called their faith did not explain but obscured the meaning of life, and that they professed it, not in order to answer the question as to life which had attracted me towards faith, but for some other purpose to which I was a stranger.

I remember how terribly I felt the return of the old feeling of despair, after the hopes with which my connection with these people had from time to time inspired me.

The more minutely they laid their doctrines before me, the more clearly I perceived their error, the more I lost all hope of finding in their faith an explanation of the meaning of life.

I was not so much alienated by the unnecessary and unreasonable doctrines which they had mingled with the Christian truths always so dear to me, as by the fact that their lives were like my own, the only difference being that they did not live according to the doctrines which they professed. I felt that they deceived themselves, and that for them, as for myself, the only meaning of life was to live

from hand to mouth, and take each for himself all that his hands can lay hold on. I saw this, because had the ideas of life which they conceived done away with fear, privation, suffering, and death, they would not have feared them. But these believers of my own class, the same as I myself, lived in comfort and abundance, struggled to increase and preserve it, were afraid of privation, suffering, and death; and again, like myself and all other not true believers, satisfied the lusts of the flesh, and led lives as evil as, if not worse than, those of infidels themselves.

No arguments were able to convince me of the sincerity of the faith of these men. Only actions, proving their conception of life to have destroyed that fear of poverty, illness, and death, so strong in myself, could have convinced me, and such actions among them I could not see. Such actions, I saw, indeed, among the open infidels of my own class in life, but never among its so-called believers.

I understood, then, that the faith of these men was not the faith which I sought; that it was no faith at all, but only an Epicurean con-

solation. I understood that this faith, if it could not really console, could at least soothe the repentant mind of a Solomon on his death-bed, but that it could not serve the enormous majority of mankind, who are born, not to be comforted by the labors of others, but to create a life for themselves. For mankind to live, for it to continue to live and be conscious of the meaning of its life, all these millions must have another and a true conception of faith. It was not, then, that I, Solomon, and Schopenhauer had not killed ourselves, which convinced me that faith existed, but that these millions have lived and are now living, carrying along with them on the impulse of their life both Solomon and ourselves.

I began to draw nearer to the believers among the poor, the simple, and the ignorant, the pilgrims, the monks, the sectaries, and the peasants. The doctrines of these men of the people, like those of the pretended believers of my own class, were Christian. Here also much that was superstitious was mingled with the truths of Christianity, but with this difference, that the superstition of the believers of

my own class was not needed by them, and never influenced their lives beyond serving as a kind of Epicurean distraction, while the superstition of the believing laboring class was so interwoven with their lives that it was impossible to conceive them without it — it was a necessary condition of their living at all. The whole life of the believers of my own class was in flat contradiction with their faith, and the whole life of the believers of the people was a confirmation of the meaning of life which their faith gave them.

Thus I began to study the lives and the doctrines of the people, and the more I studied the more I became convinced that a true faith was among them, that their faith was for them a necessary thing, and alone gave them a meaning in life and a possibility of living. In direct opposition to what I saw in my own circle — the possibility of living without faith, and not one in a thousand who professed himself a believer — amongst the people there was not in thousands a single unbeliever. In direct opposition to what I saw in my own circle — a whole life spent in idleness,

amusement, and dissatisfaction with life — I saw among the people whole lives passed in heavy labor and unrepining content. In direct opposition to what I saw in my own circle — men resisting and indignant with the privations and sufferings of their lot — the people unhesitatingly and unresistingly accepting illness and sorrow, in the quiet and firm conviction that all was for the best. In contradiction to the theory that the less learned we are the less we understand the meaning of life, and see in our sufferings and death but an evil joke, these men of the people live, suffer, and draw near to death, in quiet confidence and oftenest with joy. In contradiction to the fact that an easy death, without terror or despair, is a rare exception in my own class, a death which is uneasy, rebellious, and sorrowful is among the people the rarest exception of all. These men, deprived of all that for us and for Solomon makes the only good in life, experience the highest happiness both in amount and kind. I looked more carefully and more widely around me, I studied the lives of the past and contemporary masses of hu-

manity, and I saw that, not two or three, not ten or a hundred, but thousands and millions had so understood the meaning of life that they were able both to live and to die. All these men, infinitely divided by manners, powers of mind, education, and position, all alike in opposition to my ignorance, were well acquainted with the meaning of life and of death, quietly labored, endured privation and suffering, lived and died, and saw in all this, not a vain, but a good thing.

I began to grow attached to these men. The more I learned of their lives, the lives of the living and of the dead of whom I read and heard, the more I liked them, and the easier I felt it so to live. I lived in this way during two years, and then there came a change which had long been preparing in me, and the symptoms of which I had always dimly felt: the life of my own circle of rich and learned men, not only became repulsive, but lost all meaning whatever. All our actions, our reasoning, our science and art, all appeared to me in a new light. I understood that it was all child's play, that

it was useless to seek a meaning in it. The life of the working classes, of the whole of mankind, of those that create life, appeared to me in its true significance. I understood that this was life itself, and that the meaning given to this life was a true one, and I accepted it.

XI.

When I remembered how these very doctrines had repelled me, how senseless they had seemed when professed by men whose lives were spent in opposition to them, and how they had attracted me and seemed thoroughly reasonable when I saw men living in accordance with them, I understood why I had once rejected them and thought them unmeaning, why I now adopted them and thought them most reasonable. I understood that I had erred, and how I had erred. I had erred, not so much through having thought incorrectly, as through having lived ill. I understood that the truth had been hidden from me, not so much because I had erred in my reasoning, as because I had led the exceptional life of an epicure bent on satisfying the lusts of the flesh. I understood that my question as to what my life was, and the answer, an evil, were in accord-

ance with the truth of things. The mistake lay in my having applied an answer which only concerned myself to life in general. I had asked what my own life was, and the answer was, an evil and a thing without meaning. Exactly so, my life was but a long indulgence of my passions; it was a thing without meaning, an evil; and such an answer, therefore, referred only to my own life, and not to human life in general.

I understood the truth which I afterwards found in the Gospel; "That men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every man that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." I understood that, for the meaning of life to be understood, it was first necessary that life should be something more than an evil and unmeaning thing discovered by the light of reason. I understood why I had so long been near to, without apprehending, this self-evident truth, and that if we would judge and speak of the life of mankind, we must take that life as a whole, and not merely certain parasitic adjuncts to it.

This truth was always a truth, as $2 \times 2 = 4$, but I had not accepted it, because, besides acknowledging $2 \times 2 = 4$, I should have acknowledged that I was evil. It was of more importance to me to feel that I was good, more binding on me, than to believe $2 \times 2 = 4$. I loved good men, I hated myself, and I accepted truth. Now it was all clear to me. What if the executioner, who passes his life in torturing and cutting off heads, or a confirmed drunkard, asked himself the question, What is life? he could but get the same answer as a madman would give, who had shut himself up for life in a darkened chamber, and who believed that he would perish if he left it; and that answer could but be — Life is a monstrous evil.

The answer would be a true one, but only for the man who gave it. Here, then, was I such a madman? Were all of us rich, clever, idle men, mad like this? I understood at last that we were; that I, at any rate, was. Look at the birds; they live but to fly, to pick up their food, to build their nests, and when I see them doing this their gladness rejoices me.

The goat, the hare, the wolf live but to feed and multiply, and bring up their young; and when I see them doing this, I am well convinced of their happiness, and that their life is a reasonable one. What, then, should man do? He also must gain his living like the animals, but with this difference, that he will perish if he attempt it alone; he must labor, not for himself, but for all. And when he does so, I am firmly convinced he is happy, and his life is a reasonable one.

What had I done during my thirty years of conscious life? I had not only not helped the life of others, I had done nothing for my own. I had lived the life of a parasite, and contented myself with my ignorance of the reason why I lived at all. If the meaning of the life of man lies in his having to work out his life himself, how could I, who during thirty years had done my best to ruin my own life and that of others, expect to receive any other answer to my questioning of life but this, that my life was an evil and had no meaning in it? It was an evil; it was without meaning.

The life of the world goes on through the will

of some one. Some one makes our own life and that of the universe his own inscrutable care. To have a hope of understanding what that will means, we must first carry it out, we must do what is required of us. Unless I do what is required of me, I can never know what that may be, and much less know what is required of us all and of the whole universe.

If a naked, hungry beggar be taken from the cross-roads into an enclosed space in a splendid establishment, to be well clothed and fed, and made to work a handle up and down, it is evident that the beggar, before seeking to know why he has been taken, why he must work the handle, whether the arrangements of the establishment are reasonable or not, must first do as he is directed. If he do so he will find that the handle works a pump, the pump draws up water, and the water flows into numerous channels for watering the earth. He will then be taken from the well and set to other work; he will gather fruits and enter into the joy of his lord. As he passes from less to more important labors, he will understand better and better the arrangements of the whole establishment;

and he will take his share in them without once stopping to ask why he is there, nor will he ever think of reproaching the lord of that place.

And thus it is with those that do the will of their master; no reproaches come from simple and ignorant working-men, from those whom we look upon as brutes. But we the while, wise men that we are, devour the goods of the master, and do nothing of that which he wills us to do; but instead, seat ourselves in a circle to argue why we should move the handle, for that seems to us stupid. And when we have thought it all out, what is our conclusion? Why, that the master is stupid, or that there is none, while we ourselves are wise, only we feel that we are fit for nothing, and that we must somehow or other get rid of ourselves.

"What fools, what fools we mortals be!"

XII.

My conviction of the error into which all knowledge based on reason must fall assisted me in freeing myself from the seductions of idle reasoning. The conviction that a knowledge of truth can only be gained by living, led me to doubt the justness of my own life; but I had only to get out of my own particular groove, and look around me to observe the simple life of the real working class, to understand that such a life was the only real one. I understood that, if I wished to understand life and its meaning, I must live, not the life of a parasite, but a real life; and, accepting the meaning given to it by the combined lives of those that really form the great human whole, submit it to a close examination.

At the time I am speaking of, the following was my position.

During the whole of that year, when I was constantly asking myself whether I should or should not put an end to it all with a cord or a

pistol, during the time that my mind was occupied with the thoughts which I have described, my heart was oppressed by a tormenting feeling, which I cannot describe otherwise than as a searching after God.

This search after a God was not an act of my reason, but a feeling, and I say this advisedly, because it was opposed to my way of thinking; it came from the heart. It was a feeling of dread, or orphanhood, of isolation amid things all apart from me, and of hope in a help I knew not from whom. Though I was well convinced of the impossibility of proving the existence of God — Kant had shown me, and I had thoroughly grasped his reasoning, that this did not admit of proof — I still sought to find a God, still hoped to do so, and still, from the force of former habits, addressed myself to one in prayer. Him whom I sought, however, I did not find.

At times I went over in my mind the arguments of Kant and of Schopenhauer, showing the impossibility of proving the existence of the Deity; at times I began to refute their reasoning.

I would say to myself that causation is not in

the same category as thought and space and time. If I am, there is a cause of my being, and that the cause of all causes. That cause of all things is what is called God ; and I dwelt upon this idea, and strove with all the force that was in me to reach a consciousness of the presence of this cause.

No sooner was I conscious of a power over me than I felt a possibility of living. Then I asked myself: "What is this cause, this power? How am I to think of it? What is my relation to what I call God?" And only the old familiar answer came into my mind, "He is the creator, the giver of all." This answer did not satisfy me, and I felt that the staff of life failed me, I fell into great fear, and began to pray to Him whom I sought, that He would help me. But the more I prayed, the clearer it became that I was not heard, that there was no one to whom to pray. With despair in my heart that there was no God, I cried: "Lord, have mercy on me, and save! O Lord, my God, teach me!" But no one had mercy on me, and I felt that life stood still within me.

Again and again, however, the conviction came back to me that I could not have appeared on earth without any motive or meaning, — that I could not be such a fledgling dropped from a nest as I felt myself to be. What if I wail, as the fallen fledgling does on its back in the grass? It is because I know that a mother bore me, cared for me, fed me, and loved me. Where is that mother? If I have been thrown out, then who threw me? I cannot but see that some one who loved me brought me into being. Who is that some one? Again the same answer, God. He knows and sees my search, my despair, my struggle. "He is," I said to myself. I had only to admit that for an instant to feel that life re-arose in me, to feel the possibility of existing and the joy of it. Then, again, from the conviction of the existence of God, I passed to the consideration of our relation towards Him, and again I had before me the triune God, our Creator, who sent His Son, the Redeemer. Again, I felt this to be a thing apart from me and from the world. This God melted, as ice melts, from before my eyes; again there was

nothing left, again the source of life dried up. I fell once more into despair, and felt that I had nothing to do but to kill myself, while, worst of all, I felt also that I should never do it.

I went through these changes of conviction and mood, not once, not twice, but hundreds of times — now joy and excitement, now despair from the knowledge of the impossibility of life.

I remember one day in the early spring-time I was listening to the sounds of a wood, and thinking only of one thing, the same of which I had constantly thought for two years — I was again seeking for a God.

I said to myself: "It is well, there is no God, there is none that has a reality apart from my own imaginings, none as real as my own life — there is none such. Nothing, no miracles can prove there is, for miracles only exist in my own unreasonable imagination."

And then I asked myself: "But my conception of the God whom I seek, whence comes it?" And again life flashed joyously through my veins. All around me seemed to revive, to

have a new meaning. My joy, though, did not last long, for reason continued its work: "The conception of God is not God. Conception is what goes on within myself; the conception of God is an idea which I am able to rouse in my mind or not as I choose; it is not what I seek, something without which life could not be." Then again all seemed to die around and within me, and again I wished to kill myself.

After this I began to retrace the process which had gone on within myself, the hundred times repeated discouragement and revival. I remembered that I had lived only when I believed in a God. As it was before, so it was now; I had only to know God, and I lived; I had only to forget Him, not to believe in Him, and I died. What was this discouragement and revival? I do not live when I lose faith in the existence of a God; I should long ago have killed myself, if I had not had a dim hope of finding Him. I only really live when I feel and seek Him. "What more, then, do I seek?" A voice seemed to cry within me, "This is He, He without whom there is no life. To know God and to live are one. God is life."

Live to seek God, and life will not be without Him. And stronger than ever rose up life within and around me, and the light that then shone never left me again.

Thus I was saved from self-murder. When and how this change in me took place I could not say. As gradually, imperceptibly as life had decayed in me, till I reached the impossibility of living, till life stood still, and I longed to kill myself, so gradually and imperceptibly I felt the glow and strength of life return to me.

It was strange, but this feeling of the glow of life was no new sensation; it was old enough, for I had been led away by it in the earlier part of my life. I returned, as it were, to the past, to childhood and my youth. I returned to faith in that Will which brought me into being and which required something of me; I returned to the belief that the one single aim of life should be to become better; that is, to live in accordance with that Will; I returned to the idea that the expression of that Will was to be found in what, in the dim obscurity of the past, the great human unity had fashioned

for its own guidance; in other words, I returned to a belief in God, in moral perfectibility, and in the tradition which gives a meaning to life. The difference was that formerly I had unconsciously accepted this, whereas now I knew that without it I could not live.

The state of mind in which I then was may be likened to the following. It was as if I had suddenly found myself sitting in a boat which had been pushed off from some shore unknown to me, had been shown the direction of the opposite shore, had had oars given me, and had been left alone. I use the oars as best I can, and row on; but the farther I go towards the centre, the stronger becomes the current which carries me out of my course, and the oftener I meet other navigators, like myself, carried away by the stream. There are here and there solitary sailors who row hard, there are others who have thrown down their oars, there are large boats, and enormous ships crowded with men; some struggle against the stream, others glide on with it. The farther I get, the more, as I watch the long line floating down the cur-

rent, I forget the course pointed out to me as my own. In the very middle of the stream, beset by the crowd of boats and vessels, and carried like them along, I forget altogether in what direction I started, and abandon my oars. From all sides the joyful and exulting navigators, as they row, or sail down stream, with one voice cry out to me that there can be no other direction. I believe them, and let myself go with them. I am carried far, so far that I hear the roar of the rapids in which I must perish, and I already see boats that have been broken up within them. Then I come to myself. It is long before I clearly comprehend what has happened. I see before me nothing but destruction. I am hurrying towards it; what, then, must I do? On looking back, however, I perceive a countless multitude of boats engaged in a ceaseless struggle against the force of the torrent, and then I remember all about the shore, the oars, and the course, and at once I begin to row hard up the stream and again towards the shore.

The shore is God, the course tradition, the

oars are the free-will given me to make for the shore to seek union with the Deity. And thus the vital force was renewed in me, and I began again to live.

XIII.

I RENOUNCED the life of my own class, for I had come to confess that it was not a real life, only the semblance of one, that its superfluous luxury prevented the possibility of understanding life, and that in order to do so I must know, not an exceptional parasitic life, but the simple life of the working-classes, the life which fashions that of the world, and gives it the meaning which the working-classes accept. The simple laboring men around me were the Russian people, and I turned to this people and to the meaning which it gives to life.

This meaning may, perhaps, be expressed as follows: —

We have all of us come on earth by the will of God, and God has so created man that each of us is able to ruin or to save his soul. The problem of man's life being to save his soul, he must live after God's Word: to live after

God's word, he must renounce all the pleasures of life, labor, be humble, endure, and be charitable to all men. This to the people is the meaning of the whole system of faith, as it has come down to them through, and is now given them by, the pastors of their Church and the traditions which exist among them.

This meaning was clear to me, and dear to my heart. This popular faith, however, among the non-sectarian communities in which I moved, was inextricably bound up with something else so incapable of being explained that it repelled me. I mean the sacraments of the Church, the fasts, and the bowing before relics and images. The people were unable to separate these things, and no more could I. Though many things belonging to the faith of the people appeared strange to me, I accepted everything, I attended the church services, prayed morning and evening, fasted, prepared for the communion; and, while doing all this, for the first time felt that my reason found nothing to object to. What had formerly seemed to me impossible, now roused not the slightest opposition in me.

The position which I occupied with relation to questions of faith had become quite different to what it once was. Formerly, life itself had seemed to me full of meaning, and faith an arbitrary assertion of certain useless and unreasonable propositions which had no direct bearing on life. I had tried to find out their meaning; and, once convinced they had none, had thrown them aside. Now, on the contrary, I knew for certain that my life had not and could not have any meaning, and that the propositions of faith, not only appeared no longer useless to me, but had been shown beyond dispute by my own experience to be that which alone gave a meaning to life. Formerly I looked upon them as a worthless, illegible scrawl; now I did not understand them, but knew that they had a meaning, and resolved to find it out.

I reasoned thus: Faith springs, like man and his reason, from the mysterious first cause. That cause is God, in whom begin the body and the mind of man. As my body proceeded through successive gradations from God to me, so have my reason and my conception of life

proceeded from Him, and consequently the steps of this process of development cannot be false. All that men sincerely believe in must be true; it may be differently expressed, but it cannot be a lie, and consequently, if it seem to me a lie, that must be because I do not understand it.

Again, I said to myself: The true office of faith is to give a meaning to life which death cannot destroy. It is only natural that for faith to give an answer to the question of the king dying amid every luxury, of the old and labor-worn slave, of the unthinking child, of the aged sage, of the half-witted old woman, of the happy girl full of the strong passions of youth, of all of both sexes under all possible differences of position and education, — it is only natural that, if there be but one answer to the one eternally repeated question — "Why do I live, and what will come of my life?" — the answer, though one and the same in reality, should be infinitely varied in its form; that, in exact proportion to its unvarying unity, to its truth, and its depth, it should appear strange, and even monstrous, in the attempts to find

due expression which are owing to the bringing-up, and the social state of each individual answerer. But this reasoning, which justified the oddities of the ritual side of faith, was insufficient to make me feel that I had a right, in a matter like faith, now become the one business of my life, to take part in acts of which I still am doubtful. I ardently desired to be one with the people, and conform to the rites which they practised, but I could not do it. I felt that I should lie to myself, and mock what I held most sacred, if I did this thing. At this point our new Russian theologians came to my assistance.

According to the explanation of these divines, the fundamental dogma of faith is the infallibility of the Church. From the acceptance of this dogma follows, as a necessary consequence, the truth of all that is taught by the Church. The Church, as the assembly of believers united in love, and consequently possessing true knowledge, becomes the foundation of my faith. I argued that the truth which is in God cannot be attained by any one man, — it can only be reached by the union

of all men through love. In order to attain the truth, we must not go each his own way; and, to avoid division, we must have love one to the other, and bear with things which we do not agree with. Truth is revealed in love, and, therefore, if we do not obey the ordinances of the Church, we destroy love, and make it impossible for us to know truth.

At the time I did not perceive the sophism involved in this reasoning. I did not then see that union through love may develop love to the highest degree, but can never give the truth that comes from God, as stated in the words of the Nicene Creed,—that love can never make any particular form of creed binding on all believers. I did not then see error in this reasoning, and, thanks to it, I was able to accept and practise all the rites of the Orthodox Church, but without understanding the greater part of them. I struggled earnestly to set aside all reasoning, all contradictions, and endeavored to explain as reasonably as I could all the doctrines of the Church which presented any difficulty.

While thus fulfilling the ordinances of the

Church, I submitted my reason to the tradition adopted by the mass of my fellow-men. I united myself to my ancestors, to my beloved father, mother, and grandparents. They and all before them, lived, and believed, and brought me into being. I joined the millions of the people whom I loved. Moreover, there was nothing bad in all this, for bad with me meant the indulgence of the lusts of the flesh. When I got up early to attend divine service, I knew that I did well, were it only because, for the sake of a closer union with my ancestors and contemporaries, I tamed my intellectual pride, and, in order to seek for a meaning in life, sacrificed my bodily comfort. It was the same with preparing for the communion, the daily reading of prayers, the bowing to the ground, and the observance of all the fasts. However insignificant the sacrifices were, they were made in a good cause. I prepared for the communion, fasted, and observed regular hours for prayer both at home and at church. While listening to the church service, I weighed every word, and gave it a meaning whenever I could. At mass the words which appeared to

me to have most importance were the following: "Let us love one another in unity." What follows — the confession of belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost — I passed over, because I could not understand it.

XIV.

It was so necessary for me at that time to believe in order to live, that I unconsciously concealed from myself the contradictions and the obscurities in the commonly received doctrines.

This interpretation of the sense of the ritual had, however, its limits. Though the leading points of the Liturgy became clearer and clearer to me; though I gave a kind of meaning to such expressions as "Remembering our Sovereign Lady, the most Holy Mother of God, and all the Saints, let us devote ourselves, each other, and our whole lives to the Christ God"; though I explained the frequent repetition of prayers for the Emperor and his family by the fact that they were more exposed to temptation than others, and were therefore more in need of prayer, and the prayers for victory over our enemies and opponents to mean victory over the principle of evil; nevertheless the hymn of the Cherubim, the prepara-

tion of the bread and wine, the adoration of the Virgin — in short, two-thirds of the whole service — either remained for me without an explanation at all, or made me feel that the only one I could apply to them was false, while to lie was to break off my connection with God, and lose utterly the possibility of believing.

I felt the same at the celebration of the principal Church holidays. I could understand the seventh day, the consecration of a day to communion with God. The great holiday, however, was in remembrance of the Resurrection, the reality of which I could neither imagine nor understand. It was this which gave a name to the holiday in each week, to the Sunday, to the day on which the sacrament of the Eucharist was given, a mystery which to me was utterly inconceivable. The other twelve holidays, with the exception of Christmas, were all in remembrance of miracles, which I tried not to think of in order not to deny: the Ascension, Pentecost, Epiphany, the Intercession of the Virgin, and so on. On these holidays, I felt that the greatest impor-

tance was given to what I believed to be of the least, and I either held fast to the explanation which quieted me most, or else shut my eyes so as not to see what disquieted me.

This feeling came upon me strongest whenever I took part in the most ordinary, and generally considered the most important, sacraments, as christening and the holy communion. Here I had to do with nothing difficult, but with what was easy to be understood: such acts appeared to me a delusion, and I was on the horns of a dilemma — to lie, or to reject.

I shall never forget the painful feeling I experienced when I took the communion for the first time after many years. The service, the confession, the prayers, all this was understood by me, and produced the glad conviction that the meaning of life lay open to me. The communion I explained to myself as an action done in remembrance of Christ, and as signifying a cleansing from sin and a complete acceptance of Christ's teaching. If this explanation was an artificial one, I at least did not perceive it. It was such happiness for me to humble myself with a quiet heart before the priest, a

simple and mild old man, and repenting of my sins, to lay bare all the past troubles of my soul; it was such happiness to be united in spirit with the meek Fathers of the Church who composed these prayers; such happiness to be one with all who have believed and who do believe, that I could not feel my explanation was an artificial one. But when I drew near to the altar, and the priest called upon me to repeat that I believed that what I was about to swallow was the real body and blood, I felt a sharp pain at the heart; it was no unconsidered word, it was the hard demand of one who could never have known what faith was.

I now allow myself to say that it was a hard demand, but then I did not think so; it was only exquisitely painful. I no longer thought, as I had done in my youth, that all was clear in life; I had been drawn towards faith because outside it I had found nothing but ruin, and as therefore I could not throw faith aside, I had believed and submitted. I had found in my heart a feeling of humility and meekness which had helped me to do this. I humbled myself again, I swallowed the blood and the body

without any mocking thoughts in the wish to believe, but the shock had been given, and knowing what awaited me another time, I could never go again.

I still continued an exact observance of the rites of the Church, and I still believed that the doctrines I followed were true; and then there happened to me a thing which now is clear enough, but which then appeared to me very strange.

I once listened to the discourse of an unlettered peasant pilgrim. He spoke of God, of faith, of life, and of salvation, and a knowledge of what faith was seemed open to me.

I went amongst the people, familiarizing myself with their ideas of life and faith, and the truth became clearer and clearer to me. It was the same when I read the "Martyrology" and "Prologues"; they became my favorite books. With the exception of the miracles, and looking upon these as fables to bring out forcibly the thought, the reading of these books revealed to me the meaning of life. There I found the lives of Macarius the Great; of Tosaph the Prince (the story of Buddha); the discourses

of St. Chrysostom; the story of the traveller in the well; of the Monk who found gold; of Peter the Publican; — this is the history of the martyrs, of those who have all testified the same, that life does not end with death; here we have the story of unlettered foolish men, who knew nothing of the doctrines of the Church.

But no sooner did I mix with learned believers, or consult their books, than doubts, uneasiness, and the bitterness of dispute came over me, and I felt that the more I studied their discourses the more I wandered from the truth, the nearer I came to the precipice.

XV.

How often have I not envied the peasant, unable to read or write, his lack of learning. The very doctrines of faith which to me were nonsense contained for him nothing that was false; he was able to accept them and to believe in truth, the same truth in which I believed; while to me, unhappy one, it was clear that truth was connected with falsehood by the finest threads of difference, and that I could not receive it in such a form.

In this condition I lived for three years, and when I first, like a new convert, little by little drew nearer to truth, and, led by an instinct, groped my way to the light, these obstacles seemed to me less formidable. When I failed to understand anything, I said, "I am wrong, I am wicked." But the more I became imbued with the spirit of the truths which I studied, the more surely I saw them to be the substratum of life, the greater and more formidable became

the obstacles, the more clearly defined the line which I was unable to understand, and of which I could only seek an explanation through lying unto myself.

Notwithstanding all my doubts and sufferings, I still remained in the Orthodox Church; but practical questions arose which required immediate decision, and the decisions of the Church, contrary to the elementary principles of the faith by which I lived, compelled me finally to abandon all communion with it.

The questions were, in the first place, the relation of the Orthodox Church to other churches, to Catholicism and the so-called Sectaries. The interest which I took in this great question of faith led me at this time to form acquaintance with the professors of different creeds, Catholics, Protestants, Old Believers, New Dissenters, and others, and among them I found many who sincerely believed and obeyed the highest moral standard. I desired to be a brother to these men, and what came of it? The doctrines which had seemed to promise me the union of all men in faith and love, in the persons of their best representatives,

showed themselves but capable of educating men in a lie; resulted but in this, that what gives them strength to live is a temptation of the devil, the belief that they alone possess the possibility of knowing truth.

And I saw that the members of the Orthodox Church consider all those who do not profess the same faith as themselves to be heretics, exactly as Catholics and others account our Orthodoxy to be heresy; I saw that all consider others who did not adopt the same outward symbols and the same formulas of faith as themselves as their enemies. The Orthodox Church does this, though she tries to conceal it; and it must be so, in the first place, because the assertion that you live a lie and I am in the truth is the hardest thing that one man can say to another; in the second place, because a man who loves his children and his relations cannot but feel at enmity with those who desire to convert them to another faith. Moreover, this enmity increases as men learn more of the particular doctrines which they adopt. Thus I, who had believed faith was to be found in the union of love, was unwillingly forced to see

that the doctrines of faith destroy the very thing which they should produce.

This snare is so evident, to men living like ourselves in countries where differing faiths are professed, and witnessing the contempt and self-confidence with which the Catholic absolutely rejects Protestantism and Orthodoxy, repaid by the scorn of the Orthodox for the Catholic and the Protestant, and that of the latter for both the others, while the same relation of enmity includes the Old Believers, the Revivalists, the Shakers, and all other creeds, that at first it perplexes us.

We say to ourselves, "No, it cannot be so simple as that, and yet these men have not seen that when two propositions flatly contradict each other, the truth on which faith should rest is in neither. There must be some cause for this, there must be some explanation." I myself thought there was, and sought for it. I read everything I could get on the subject, and consulted with as many as I could, but the only explanation I obtained was that of the hussar, who accounts his regiment the first in the world, while his friend the lancer

says the same of his own. The clergy of all religions, the best among them, all told me of their belief that they alone were right and all others wrong, and that all they could do for those who were in error was to pray for them. I went to the Archimandrites, the Archprelates, the Priors, and the Monks, and asked them, but no one made the slightest attempt to explain this snare to me but one, and his explanation was such that I put no more questions to any one.

I said that, for every unbeliever who returns to belief (in which category I place the whole of the present young generation) the principal question is, Why is truth to be found in the Orthodox Church and not in the Lutheran nor the Catholic one? He is taught in his gymnasium, and he cannot but know what the peasant is ignorant of, that Protestants and Catholics equally affirm their own faith to be the only true one. Historical proofs, twisted by each party to serve their own purpose, are insufficient.

Is it not possible, as I have already said, for a higher knowledge to issue from the

disappearance of these differences, as they do already disappear for those who sincerely believe? Can we not go farther on our way to meet the Old Believers? They affirm that our way of signing the cross, of singing hallelujah, and of moving round the altar, is not the same as theirs. We say, "You believe in the Nicene Creed, in all the sacraments, and we also believe." Let us add, "Keep to that, and for the rest do as you will." We shall then be united to them by this, that we both place the essential points of faith above the unessential. Again, can we not say to Catholics, "You believe in certain things which are essential, and for what concerns the dispute about the procession of the Trinity and the Pope, do as you please"? Can we not say the same to the Protestant, and unite with him in what is really important? My fellow-disputant agreed with me, but added that such concessions draw down the reproach that the clergy have receded from the faith of their forefathers and favor dissent, while the office of those in authority in the Church is to preserve the purity of the Russian Greek

Orthodox faith as handed down from our ancestors.

Then I understood it all. I am in search of faith, the staff and strength of life, while these men seek the best means of fulfilling in the sight of men certain human obligations, and having to deal with earthly affairs they fulfil them as ordinary men ever do. However much they may talk of their pity for the errors of their brethren, of praying for them at the throne of the Most High, for earthly affairs force is needed, and force always has been, is, and will be, applied. If two religious sects each believe that truth resides in themselves, and that the faith of the other is a lie, they will preach their doctrines in the hope of converting their brethren to the truth, and, if false doctrines are taught to the inexperienced sons of the Church who still tread in the ways of truth, she cannot but burn the books and banish the men who seduce her sons. What can be done with the Sectaries who, in their enthusiasm for a faith which the Church pronounces false, seduce her sons? What can be done with them, but to cut off their

heads or imprison them? In the time of Alexis Michaelovitch men were burnt at the stake; in other words, the severest punishment of the time was applied, and in our days also the severest punishment is applied; men are condemned to solitary confinement. When I looked around me at all that was done in the name of religion, I was horrified, and almost entirely withdrew from the Orthodox Church.

The second point which concerned the relations of the Church to the problems of life was her connection with war and executions. It was the time of the war in Russia. Russians slew their brethren in the name of Christian love. Not to think of this was impossible. Not to see that murder is an evil, contrary to the very first principles of every faith, was impossible. In the churches, however, men prayed for the success of our arms, and the teachers of religion accepted these murders as acts which were the consequence of faith. Not only murder in actual warfare was approved, but, during the troubles which ensued, the authorities

of the Church, her teachers, monks, and ascetics, approved the murder of erring and helpless youths. I looked round on all that was done by men who professed to be Christians, and I was horrified.

XVI.

I CEASED from this time to doubt, and became firmly convinced that all was not truth in the faith which I had joined. Formerly I should have said that all in this faith was false, but now it was impossible to say so.

That the men of the people had a knowledge of truth was incontestable, for otherwise they could not live. Moreover, this knowledge of truth was open to me; I already lived by it, and felt all its force, but in that same knowledge there was also error. Of that again I could not doubt. All, however, that had formerly repelled me now presented itself in a vivid light. Although I saw that there was less of what had repelled me as false among the people than among the representatives of the Church, I also saw that in the belief of the people what was false was mingled with what was true.

Whence, then, came this truth and this falsehood? Both the falsehood and the truth came to them from what is called the Church; both are included in the so-called sacred traditions and writings. I was thus, whether I would or not, brought to the study and analysis of these writings and traditions, a study which up to that time I had feared, and I turned to the study of theology, which I had once thrown aside with contempt as useless. Then theology had seemed to me but profitless trifling with nonsense, for I was surrounded by the phenomena of life, and I thought them clear and full of meaning; now I should have been glad to throw off ideas unsuited to a healthy state of mind, but I could not.

On this doctrinal basis was founded, or at least with it was very intimately bound up, the only explanation of the meaning of the life I had so lately discovered. However strange it might seem to my worn but practised intellect, it was the only hope of salvation. To be understood, it must be cautiously and carefully examined, even though the result might not be the certain knowledge

of science, which, aware as I was of the special character of religious inquiry, I did not and could not seek to obtain.

I would not attempt to explain everything. I knew that the explanation of the whole, like the beginning of all things, was hidden in infinity. I wished to be brought to the inevitable limit where the incomprehensible begins; I wished that what remained uncomprehended should be so, not because the mental impulse to inquiry was not just and natural (all such impulses are, and without them I could understand nothing), but because I had learned the limits of my own mind. I wished to understand so that every unexplained proposition should appear to my reason necessarily unexplainable, and not an obligatory part of belief. I never doubted that the doctrines contained both truth and falsehood, and I was bound to separate the one from the other. I began to do this. What I found of false and of true, and to what results I came, forms the second part of this work,* which, if it be thought worth

* My Religion.

while, and if it can be useful to any one, will probably be some day published.

1879.

The above was written by me three years ago.

The other day, on looking over this part again, on returning to the succession of ideas and feelings through which I had passed while writing it, I saw a dream.

This dream repeated for me in a condensed form all that I had lived through and described, and I therefore think that a description of it may, for those who have understood me, serve to render clearer, to refresh the remembrance of, and to collect into one whole, all that has been described at so much length in these pages. The dream was as follows.

I am lying on my back in bed, and I feel neither particularly well and comfortable, nor the contrary. I begin to think whether it is well for me to lie, and something makes me feel uncomfortable in the legs; if the bed be too short or ill-made, I know not, but something is not right. I move my legs about, and at the

same time begin to think how and on what I am lying, a thing which previously had never troubled me. I examine the bed, and see that I am lying on a network of cords fastened to the sides of the bedstead. My heels lie on one of these cords, my legs on another, and this is uncomfortable. I am somehow aware that the cords can be moved, and with my legs I push the cord away, and it seems to me that thus it will be easier. But I had pushed the cord too far; I try to catch it with my legs, but this movement causes another cord to slip from under me, and my legs hang down. I move my body to get right again, convinced that it will be easy, but this movement causes other cords to slip and change their places beneath me, and I perceive that my position is altogether worse; my whole body sinks and hangs without my legs touching the ground. I hold myself up only by the upper part of the back, and I feel now not only discomfort, but horror. I now begin to ask myself what I had not thought of before. I ask myself where I am, and on what I am lying. I begin to look round, and first I look below, to the place towards which my

body sank, and where I feel it must soon fall. I look below, and I cannot believe my eyes.

I am on a height far above that of the highest tower or mountain, a height beyond all my previous powers of conception. I cannot even make out whether I see anything or not below me, in the depths of that bottomless abyss over which I am hanging and into which I feel drawn. My heart ceases to beat, and horror fills my mind. To look down is too terrible. I feel that if I look down I shall slip from the last cord and perish. I stop looking, but not to look is still worse, for then I think of what will at once happen to me when the last cord breaks. I feel that I am losing in my terror the last remnant of my strength, and that my back is gradually sinking lower and lower. Another instant, and I shall fall.

Then all at once came into my mind the thought that it could not be true, that it was a dream; I will awake. I strive to wake myself and cannot. "What can I do?" I ask myself, and as I put the question I look above.

Above stretches another gulf. I look into this, and try to forget the abyss below, and I

do forget. The infinite depth repels and horrifies me; the infinite height attracts and satisfies me. I still hang on the last cords which have not yet slipped from under me over the precipice; I know that I am hanging thus, but I look only upwards, and my fear leaves me. As happens in dreams, I hear a voice saying, "Look well; it is there!" I pierce farther and farther into the infinity above, and I feel that it calms me. I remember all that has happened — how I moved my legs, how I was left hanging in air, how I was terrified, and how I was saved from my fears by looking above. I ask myself, "And now, am I not hanging still?" and I feel in all my limbs, without looking, the support by which I am held. I perceive that I no longer hang nor fall, but have a fast hold. I question myself how it is that I hold on. I touch myself, I look around, and I see that under the middle of my body there passes a stay, and on looking up I find that I am lying perfectly balanced, and that it was this stay alone that held me up before. As it happens in dreams, the mechanism by which I am supported appears perfectly natural to me,

a thing to be easily understood, and not to be doubted, although this mechanism has no apparent sense when I am awake. In my sleep I was even astonished that I had not understood this before. At my bedside stands a pillar, the solidity of which is beyond doubt, though there is nothing for it to stand upon. From this pillar runs a cord, somehow cunningly and simply fixed, and if I lie across this cord and look upwards, there cannot be even a question of my falling. All this was clear to me, and I was glad and easy in my mind. It seemed as if some one said to me, "See that you remember!" And I awoke.

LYOF N. TOLSTOÏ.

1882.

THE

SPIRIT OF CHRIST'S TEACHING.

(A COMMENTARY ON THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL.)

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PREFACE.

THIS short exposition of the Gospel is extracted from a larger manuscript work, which cannot be published in Russia. The work consists of four parts.

The contents of the present book have been extracted from the third part, which is an investigation independent of previous interpretations, and solely according to what has reached us of the teaching of Christ, as attributed to him, and related in the Gospels.

The Gospels have been harmonized by me according to the sense of their teaching, and in so doing I have had to deviate but little from the order in which they stand; so that there are rather fewer transpositions of the text in my rendering than in most other harmonies with which I am acquainted. The Gospel of John is taken in the same order as the original.

The division of the Gospel into twelve sections is the natural outcome of the bearing of its teaching, every two sections being united by a link of cause and consequence.

I have also added the introduction from the first chapter of John's Gospel, in which he gives his view of the meaning of the whole teaching, and the conclusion from his Epistle (probably written before the Gospel), which represents a general deduction from all that precedes. The introduction and conclusion do not form an essential part, but only give a general view of the whole teaching; and though both might be omitted without detriment (the more so that they are the words of John and not of Jesus), I have preserved them, because, when the teaching of Christ is taken in its plain meaning, these parts, in their connection with the whole and with each other, represent, in opposition to the strange interpretation of the Church, the simplest indication of the spirit in which Christ's meaning must be understood.

At the head of each section, in addition to a short definition of the contents, I have inserted words corresponding to each from the prayer

which Jesus gave to his disciples. When my work was ended, I was surprised to find that the Lord's prayer is indeed nothing less than the whole teaching of Christ, expressed in the most condensed form, and in the identical system by which I had distributed the sections, every expression of it corresponding with them, in idea and order. In the manuscript of the third part, the Gospel, according to the four Evangelists, is related without the least omission; but in the present work the following passages have been left out: the conception, the birth of John Baptist, his imprisonment and death, the birth of Christ, his flight with Mary into Egypt, his miracles in Cana and Capernaum, the expulsion of demons, the walking on the sea, the withering of the fig-tree, the raising of the dead, the resurrection of Christ, and the references to the prophecies fulfilled during his life. All this has been omitted in the present work, because, not containing any part of the teaching, but only describing events which took place before, during, and after the public life of Christ, these passages would render the exposition

needlessly intricate; nor do they contain in themselves either contradiction or proof, though their significance for Christianity has been that, to the eyes of unbelievers, they corroborate the divinity of Jesus; but by those who, uninfluenced by the account of miracle, are unable, from the nature of the teaching itself, to doubt that divinity, they are naturally set aside, because felt to be needless.

In the original full exposition, every digression from the accepted translation, all inserted explanations and omissions are justified and proved by a comparison with different versions of the Gospel, by context, and by philological and other considerations. In the present work all these are omitted, because, however precise and correct may be the analysis of separate passages, argument alone will convince no one as to a right understanding of the teaching itself. Such evidence must always lie in its own unity, clearness, simplicity, and completeness, and its force will arise from the sympathy with which it meets the consciousness of every man who is seeking for truth.

Concerning all deviations from the version

accepted by the churches, the reader must understand that the generally accepted notion as to the Gospels being, to the veriest letter, sacred, is not only a most profound error, but also a most gross and harmful deception. He must remember also that Christ himself wrote no book, as did philosophers like Plato or Marcus Aurelius; never did he, like Socrates, transmit his teaching to learned or even to educated men, but spoke for the most part to an unlettered crowd, and that only long after his death was his teaching and life described.

It must also not be forgotten that, out of a large number of such descriptive manuscripts, the Church selected at first three, adding later a fourth Gospel (that according to John), that out of the great mass of literature about Christ they could not but have accepted much that was not strictly accurate, and that there are as many doubtful passages in the Canonical Gospels as in the rejected Apocryphal writings. Nor does it follow, if the teaching of Christ were inspired, that a certain number of verses and letters in recording it should become so, or that certain selections should be considered

sacred by the edict of a man. (Let it be considered that these selected Gospels are the work of many human minds, that during centuries they underwent endless revisions, that all the Gospels of the fourth century which have reached us are written without punctuation or division into verse and chapter, and that the actual number of different renderings for Gospel passages is estimated at fifty thousand.)

All this must be kept in view by the reader, lest he should be carried away by the idea that the Gospels have been transmitted to us direct from heaven in the identical form in which we at present accept them, and he must admit that it is not only unblamable to omit from them unnecessary passages, but that it is most unreasonable to be withheld from doing so by the sentiment that considers sacred an appointed number of verses and syllables.

On the other hand, I would not have it understood that because I do not consider the Gospels to be sacred books, directly descended from heaven, that therefore I regard them as mere monuments in the history of religious

literature. I am conscious of both their theological and historical bearing, but I desire to contemplate neither; what I see in Christianity is not an exclusively divine revelation, nor a mere historical phenomenon, but a teaching which gives the meaning of life.

When at the age of fifty, having asked all the reputed philosophers about me as to the meaning of life, and of myself, and having been told by them that life was an evil, and without meaning, and I myself an accidental concatenation of particles, I fell into despair, and thought to kill myself, I was brought to Christianity by the remembrance of a past time; how in my childhood I and those about me, chiefly men uncorrupted by wealth, had a faith and saw a purpose, and with the light of this reality I called to question the wisdom of those of my own class, and tried to understand the answer of Christianity to believers.

On studying the various forms of Christian religions, I found them to consist in large measure of the strangest superstitions, which, however, did not prevent many from finding life in their teaching. I then began to con-

sider the source from which they were derived, and found in the Gospels an explanation of the meaning of life that perfectly satisfied me, one higher than anything I had known, or could imagine. And here, dazzled in new-found light, I found full answer for all questioning as to the meaning and purpose of my life and that of others, that explained the solutions of every other nation, and to my mind excelled them. I had sought a reply, not to some historic or theologic difficulty, but to the question of life; and therefore to me now the chief matter is, not whether Jesus Christ was God, or from whom descended the Holy Ghost, or when and by whom was a certain Gospel written, or if it may not even be attributed to Christ; but the light itself is of importance to me, that it still shines upon me after eighteen hundred years with undimmed brightness; but how to call it, or of what it consist, or who gave it existence, is immaterial to me.

This introduction might here conclude if the Gospels were books but lately discovered, or if the teaching of Christ had not undergone eighteen centuries of misinterpretation. In order

to understand it, it is well to acquire a clear apprehension of the various systems with which it has been overlaid.

The commonest and most subtle of these is the substitution, under the name of Christian doctrine, of the teaching of the Church for that of Christ which it professes to be, though composed from the explanations of most contradictory writings, in which the teaching of Christ forms but a small part, and that contorted and strained to accord with the explanation of the rest of the document.

According to this misinterpretation, the teaching of Jesus is only one link in the chain of revelation that commenced with the creation of man, and continues in the Church to the present day. By it Jesus is called God, but such acceptance does not place in His teaching a deeper import than that contained in the words of Moses, in the Psalms, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, the Apocalypse, the Decrees of the Councils, and the writings of the Fathers; no understanding of the teaching of Christ is admitted which does not accord with that of the preceding and follow-

ing revelation, and in furtherance of this object the least contradictory meaning for passages most hopelessly at variance in the Pentateuch, Psalms, Gospels, etc., is eagerly sought for.

There naturally may be an innumerable number of such interpretations having for their object, not the truth, but the reconciliation of contradictions in the Old and New Testaments, every man having a solution of his own, and an assertion that such is a continued revelation of the Holy Ghost, as the Epistles of Paul, the Decrees of the Councils, commencing, "We and the Holy Ghost," the Edicts of the Popes, Synods, and of all sects and persons who claim and proclain that they are the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit. All adopt the same groundless subterfuge for sanction as to the truth of their own interpretation, and they forget that a like method may be, and has been, employed by others who contradict them.

Without entering into an analysis of the faiths so formed, each with its own declaration of truth, it is easy to see that the common ground of all, the equal inspiration of both

Old and New Testament, forms an insurmountable, self-erected obstacle to understanding the teaching of Christ, and that hence emanates the possibility — nay, even the necessity — of a large number of hostile sects, whose formation can only be prevented by a reconciliation of all the varied revelations, or by a right conception of the teaching of one man, believed to be God. The teaching of Him who has descended to earth for the very sake of our instruction cannot be variously understood. If it was indeed God, He at least would have so disclosed the truth that all might understand; if He failed to do so, how then is He God?. or, if, indeed, the truths of God are such that even He cannot make them intelligible, how can men do so?

If Christ were not God, a great man only, then still less can his teaching engender sects; for a great man is only great so far as he expresses clearly what others have rendered incomprehensible. His words may be dark, but never misty, and there will, and must be, many ways into the darkness, but all will tend towards elucidation. All clear, deep insight into

his obscurity, at one with the spirit of his teaching, uncontradicted by the plainer facts of it, and bringing the whole into conformity, will be accepted eagerly by all, and cannot of itself form sects, or rouse animosity. False interpretation will shed itself in time; and that alone which claims a source in the supernatural, which asserts itself as a revelation of the Holy Ghost, demanding recognition as the sole truth, and condemnation for every other, can become sectarian; for the sectarianism of Christianity has its root in the idea that the Gospels are to be understood, not by themselves, but in accordance with all so-called Holy Writings, and in the fact that the Church, professing a revelation of the Holy Ghost, which from its first descent upon the Apostles has been constantly transmitted by its own elected representatives, nowhere expresses clearly and finally what this revelation may be, and yet upon its supposed continuity builds a faith — and calls it Christ's.

Like the Mahometans, who hold to the revelations of Moses, Christ, and Mahomet, these churchmen admit three also — of Moses, of

Christ, and of the Holy Ghost; but unlike the former, who subordinate those of Moses and of Christ to that of Mahomet, who, as the last revelation, explained all that preceded him, and claimed from faithful believers absolute credence; they would accept all three, and call themselves after the name of the second, in order to combine the license of their own teaching with the authority of Christ's.

Those who accept the revelation of Paul, of the Councils, of the Fathers, of the Pope, or of the Patriarchs, should state unmistakably that they do so, and should call their creed by the name of the last revealer. Far from doing so, they preach doctrines most alien to Christ, and yet so claim his countenance that one might gather from them that it was Christ who declared that it was by his blood he had redeemed the world, that God was a Trinity, that the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles and was transmitted to the priesthood by the laying on of hands, that for salvation seven sacraments are needed, that the communion must be celebrated in two aspects, and

so forth; whereas in all Christ's teaching there is no hint even at all this.

Such a faith might be called that of the Holy Ghost, for only one that acknowledges the revelation of Jesus Christ as final and in itself complete should be called by his name.

Argument on such a point may appear needless, yet up to the present the teaching of Christ has never been separated from an artificial and altogether unwarrantable connection with the Old Testament, on the one hand, and on the other from such arbitrary additions to, and perversions of, its reality as are continually made in the name of the Holy Ghost.

Up to the present time, some, conceiving Christ to be the second person of the Trinity, accept his teaching only as it accords with that pseudo-revelation of the Holy Ghost which they find in the Old Testament, the Epistles, the Edicts of the Councils, and the Patristic writings, and preach a strange creed founded thereon which they assert to be the faith of Christ. Others, who do not believe Christ to

be God, understand his teaching by the interpretation of Paul and others; believing him to have been a man, they would, however, deprive him of the right every man may claim, of being only answerable for his own words, and in trying to explain his teaching credit him with what he would never have dreamed of saying. This school of critics, well represented by Renan, without giving themselves the trouble of extricating in the teaching of Jesus what he taught himself from what is ascribed to him, without endeavoring to obtain from it any deep meaning, explain his appearance and the propagation of his faith by incidents in his life, and from the circumstances of his time. The problem, however, which they have failed to explain is, that eighteen hundred years ago there appeared a poor man who taught, was beaten, and executed; and though since his time many others have in like manner perished for their belief, this one man is still thought by thousands to be — God. Churchmen tell us that he is so considered because so he is; but if he be not, how can the fact be explained?

And it is entirely overlooked by the critics of this school, who diligently investigate all the details of the life of Christ, that, however much they may disclose by such a process, they do in reality discover nothing; could they even establish the minutest details of his life, they would be as far as ever from the secret of his influence, which is hid, not with the people amongst whom he abode, nor by the history and superstition of the times, but in the nature of this man's teaching which made humanity single him out from amongst all other preachers, and accept him as God.

Explanation can only come from a special study of his teaching. And the solution is simple; but it must be undertaken independently of the many false interpretations volunteered by men who neither wished nor were able to understand him.

The modern school of criticism to which I have referred was so pleased with its own assertion of the non-divinity of Christ, that it has since directed all its efforts to complete the proof of his humanity, forgetting that the more successful be the process, the more difficult

will the final solution be as to the reason of his influence. In order clearly to understand this singular error, it is only necessary to read an article by Havet, one of the imitators of Renan, who asserts that "Jésus n'avait rien de chrétien," or to find in Sourris a proposition which seems to give him pleasure — that Jesus Christ was a very rough and stupid man.

It is not a contradiction of the divinity of Christ that is required, but an exposition of his teaching in all its purity, so lofty and so simple as to obtain for its founder the title of God.

And therefore, if the reader belong to that large number of educated men, who, having been brought up in the religion of the Church, have recoiled from its contradiction of common sense and the conscience; and if he have not lost all love and respect for the spirit of Christ's teaching, I would ask him to consider that what has alienated him is equally foreign to Christ, who has been made responsible for all the monstrous parasitic tradition that has fastened about his words, and that to judge of Christ's Christianity he must study its effect

upon its Founder; and if he do so, he will discover that it has no admixture of elements, no sympathy with superstition, no dregs, no darknesses; but that it is the strictest, purest, and fullest system of metaphysical ethics, above the most ambitious ascent of human reason, and in the wide circle of which moves to its achievement all highest human effort.

If the reader is one of those who profess the religion of the Church not for the attainment of personal advantage, but for their own inner welfare, I would ask him to consider how different a thing, despite its similarity of name, is the teaching in this book from that which he follows, and to decide, not whether the faith so offered him coincides with his own religion, but which of the two most agrees with his heart and reason.

But if he belong to those who, professing the doctrines of the Church, hold to them, not from belief, but for convenience, then let him know that, however many adherents such a method may have, however powerful they may

be, on whatever thrones they may seat themselves, or by whatever high names they may be called, they are not the accusers, but the accused. Let such remember that they have long ago said all that for themselves can be said; that, had they succeeded in proving all they desire, the same has been done to its own satisfaction by each of the hundred creeds that on a mutual basis mutually reject each other; but that now not proof is demanded of them, but that they should justify themselves from the charge of blasphemy in having held the teaching of Esdra, the Councils, the Theophilacts, equal to that of Christ the God, and from the charge of calumny against God, in having proclaimed as His teaching the fanaticism of their own hearts, and from the charge of deception in having hid the word of God, and set up in its place their own religion of the Holy Ghost; and so depriving millions of men of the good Christ brought for them, have given to the world, for his peace and love, the froward countenance of malice and murder.

Such have before them two alternatives: the

rejection of the falsehood or the persecution * of those who so correct them, for which, while ending my writings, I prepare myself with joy and with fear for my weakness.

* The English reader must remember that the author is still living under a system of religious repression. — Ed.

INTRODUCTION.

THE GOSPEL. THE GOOD TIDINGS OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.

The Understanding of Life.

THE announcement of Jesus Christ substituted a conception of the meaning of life for faith in an external God.

The Gospel is the announcement that the source of all is not an external God, as men think, but the Spirit of Life. And, therefore, in the place of what men call God, according to the Gospel, stands this spirit.

Without it there is no life, all men are alive only through it, and those who do not understand this, but suppose the flesh to be the foundation of life, deprive themselves of the true life; whereas those who understand that they are alive not through the flesh but through the spirit, have the true life that has been shown by Jesus Christ.

Having conceived that the true life of man originates in the spirit, he gave men the teaching and example of that life in the body.

Previous religions represented a law, stating what was, and what was not to be done for the worship of God. But the teaching of Christ consists in the understanding of life. No one has ever seen or can know an external God, and therefore the worship of an external God cannot direct life.

Only the acceptance of the source of all, an inward consciousness of the knowledge which flows from that source, points out the way to life.

THE

SPIRIT OF CHRIST'S TEACHING.

CHAPTER I.

THE SON OF GOD.

Man, the son of God, powerless in the flesh, is free in the spirit. (Our Father.)

CHRIST in his childhood called God his Father. There was at that time in Judea a prophet called John, who preached the coming of God upon the earth, if men would change their lives, counting all men as equal; would not offend but help each other; that so His kingdom might be established. Having heard this preaching, Jesus retired from men into the wilderness in order to contemplate the life of man, and his relation to the eternal beginning of all, called God. He accepted as his Father the eternal source of all, which John had preached.

Having stayed in the wilderness forty days

without food, he began to suffer from hunger, and thought to himself, I am the son of God the Almighty, and therefore I must be as He is; but lo, I want to eat, and yet bread does not appear at my desire, therefore I am not almighty. Then he said to himself, Though I cannot create bread out of stone, yet I can refrain from bread; and so, if not almighty in the flesh, I can become so in the spirit, for I can conquer the flesh, and not in it, but in the spirit, be the son of God. But he said again to himself, If I am the son of a spirit, then I can renounce the flesh, and destroy it. And to this he answered, I am born through the spirit into the flesh; such was the will of my Father, and I may not oppose it. But if thou canst not satisfy the desires of thy flesh, nor renounce it, thou shouldest work for it, and enjoy all the pleasures it can afford thee. And to this he replied, I can neither satisfy the desires of the flesh nor yet renounce it, but my life is almighty in the spirit of my Father, and therefore in the flesh I must serve, and work only for the spirit, the Father.

And having become persuaded that the life of man is in the spirit of the Father, Jesus came out of the wilderness, and began to preach unto men. He declared that this spirit was in him, that henceforth the heavens were opened, and the powers of heaven had united with man, for whom a life of eternity and freedom had commenced, and that all men, however cursed by the flesh, might attain it.

CHAPTER II.

And therefore man must work, not for the flesh but according to the spirit. (Which art in heaven.)

The Jews, considering themselves true believers, worshipped an external God, the Creator and Lord of the universe.

According to them, this God had entered into an agreement with them, in which He promised to help them, and they to worship Him; one of the chief conditions in the agreement being the keeping of the Sabbath. Jesus said, The Sabbath is a human institution. A man who lives in the spirit is above all external rites. The keeping of the Sabbath, like all rites of outward worship, includes a delusion. We cannot do nothing on the Sabbath; a good deed must be done at any time, and if the Sabbath hinders the doing of a good action, the Sabbath is evidently an error.

Another condition in this agreement with God was the avoidance of the society of those of another faith. Concerning this, Jesus said that God required not sacrifice but mutual love. He also said, referring to the rule of absolution and purification, that God requires charity before external cleanliness; all such ceremonies, he said, were harmful, the very tradition of the Church an evil, as it leads men to neglect the most important deeds of love towards a father or mother, and to justify themselves by tradition.

Concerning all that is eternal, the rules of the former law, which defined cases of defilement, Jesus said, Know all of you that nothing external can defile a man; he is defiled only by what he thinks and does.

After this he went to Jerusalem, the town that was considered sacred, and, entering the Temple which the orthodox believers of the time considered the abode of God, said that man is more important than the Temple, and that it is only necessary to love and to help one's neighbor. Jesus said also that there is no need to worship God in any definite place,

but that we must worship the Father by deed and in the spirit, which is the consciousness in man of his sonship to the eternal Spirit, which may neither be seen nor shown.

Temples are needless, for the true temple is the world cemented together with love; and external worship is both false and hurtful when it encourages evil deeds, like that of the Jews which enjoined murder and the meglecting of parents, and because the man who is exact in the accomplishment of rites becomes self-satisfied, and neglects the doing of love.

Man is the son of God by the spirit, and therefore he must worship the Father in the spirit.

CHAPTER III.

From the spirit of the Father hath proceeded the life of all men. (Hallowed be Thy name.)

THE disciples of John asked Jesus, What was his kingdom of God. He said, I and John preach the same kingdom; it is that all men, however poor, may be blessed. John was the first who gave to the people the kingdom of God, not in an external form, but in the souls of men.

The orthodox believers went to hear him, but understood nothing, for such can only conceive what themselves invent about God, and marvel that men refuse their inventions. But John preached the kingdom of God within men, and so out-went his predecessors that from his time the law, the prophets, and all external worship became unnecessary, since it was disclosed that the kingdom of God was in the hearts of men.

The beginning and end of all is in the soul. Every man recognizes, besides his bodily conception, a free spirit within himself, with a power of reasoning independent of the body. This spirit, infinite and proceeding from the infinite, is the beginning of all which we call God, and we know Him only through our knowledge of Him in ourselves. This spirit is the source of our life, and must be put above all, for by it we live, and having made it the foundation of our being, we receive eternal life.

The Father who sent His spirit into men did not do so to deceive them with the loss of it, but that they might have it forever. We cannot choose life and death.

Life in the spirit is death in the body; in the spirit is life and good, in the body darkness and evil.

Belief in the spirit is the doing of good, unbelief is the doing of evil; the one is life, the other death. God the Creator, the founder of all, we cannot know; but we may believe that He has sown, in all alike, the spirit, which on good ground grows, and on bad fails.

Only the spirit gives life to men, and it depends on them whether they keep or lose it. Evil does not exist for the spirit, for it is but the counterfeit of life. Existence or non-existence: for every man, if he choose it, the kingdom of heaven within him. All may enter or refrain; and he who possesses the life of the spirit *has* eternal life.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

And therefore the will of the Father is that all men should have life and happiness. (Thy kingdom come.)

Jesus had pity on men because they knew not true happiness, and he taught them. He said, Blessed are those who have no goods, no fame, and no care for these things, but wretched are they who seek wealth and honors; for the poor and the oppressed obey the will of the Father, which the rich and the honored seek only from men in this life. In order to fulfil the will of the Father, we must not fear to be poor and despised; we must be glad of it, and thus show men in what true happiness consists.

In order to fulfil the will of the Father, which gives life and happiness to all men, we must fulfil five commandments.

The first commandment —

To offend no one, and by no act to excite evil in others, for out of evil comes evil.

The second commandment —

To be in all things chaste, and not to quit the wife whom we have taken; for the abandoning of wives and the changing of them is the cause of all loose living in the world.

The third commandment —

Never to take an oath, because we can promise nothing, for man is altogether in the hands of the Father, and oaths are imposed for wicked ends.

The fourth commandment —

Not to resist evil, to bear with offences, and to do yet more than is demanded of us; neither to judge, nor to go to law, for every man is himself full of faults, and cannot teach. By seeking revenge men only teach others to do the same.

The fifth commandment —

To make no distinction between our own countrymen and foreigners, for all men are the children of one Father.

These five commandments should be observed, not to gain praise from man, but for

our own sakes, for our own happiness, and therefore neither prayer nor fasting in the sight of man is necessary. The Father knows all we need. So we have nothing to ask Him for, but only to strive to do His will. The will of the Father is this, that we should have no malice in our hearts to any one.

To fast is unnecessary, because men only fast to obtain the praise of others, and the praise of man is what we should avoid. We have only to care for one thing — to live according to the will of the Father, and the rest will all come of itself. If we take care for the things of the flesh, we cannot take care for the things which are of the kingdom of Heaven. A man may live without care for food or dress. The Father will give life. We only need to take care that we are living at the present moment after the will of the Father. The Father gives even to children what they need. We have only to desire the strength of the spirit, which is given by the Father. The five commandments show the way to the kingdom of Heaven. This narrow path alone leads to eternal hope. False teachers, wolves in sheep's

clothing, always try to drive men from this road. We must beware of them. It is always easy to recognize these false teachers, because they teach evil in the name of good. If they teach violence and slaughter, they are false teachers. By what they teach they may be known.

It is not he who calls upon the name of God, but he who does good work, that fulfils the will of the Father. Thus, whoever fulfils these five commandments will have the absolute certainty of a true life which nothing can deprive him of, but whoever does not fulfil them will not have any certainty of life, but a life which he will soon lose, so that nothing will remain to him.

The teaching of Jesus astonished and delighted all the people, because it promised liberty to all.

The teaching of Jesus was the fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah, that the chosen of God should bring light unto men, should defeat evil, and should establish truth, not by violence, but by mildness, humility, and goodness.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRUE LIFE.

The fulfilment of the will of the Father gives a true life. (Thy will be done.)

The wisdom of life is to understand that we live but as the sons of the Spirit, who is our Father. Men adopt for their lives the aims of the flesh, and through attaining those aims torment themselves and others. By accepting the teaching of the spirit as to life, and by subduing and quieting the flesh, men obtain the full satisfaction in the life of the spirit, of the life which was appointed for them. It happened once that Jesus asked a woman of another faith to give him to drink. The woman refused, under the pretext that she was of another faith. On this Jesus said to her, If thou hadst understood that he is a living man who asks thee for drink, in whom is the spirit of the Father, thou wouldst not have refused, but have sought by

doing good to be united in the spirit to the Father, and the spirit of the Father would have given thee water, not such as that which makes men wish to drink again, but water which gives eternal life. It is needless to pray to God in any appointed place; those only can serve Him in whom is His spirit, by deeds of love.

And Jesus said to his disciples, The true food of man is the fulfilment of the will of the Father. The fulfilment of that will is always possible. Our whole life is a gathering of the living fruits sown in us by the Father. These fruits are the good which we do unto others.

We have no need to await anything; our life must be a ceaseless act of good to man.

After this Jesus happened to be in Jerusalem. There, there was a bathing-place, and a man lying doing nothing, a sick man waiting to be cured by a miracle. Jesus went up to him and said, Wait not to be cured by a miracle, but cure thyself as far as thou hast strength, and mistake not the meaning of life. The sick man listened to Jesus, arose, and went his way.

On seeing that, the Pharisees began to reproach Jesus for what he had said, and for hav-

ing cured the sick on the Sabbath. Jesus said unto them: I have done nothing new, I have done only what our common Father, the Great Spirit, does. He lives and gives life to men, and I have done the same. To do this is the vocation of every man. Every man is free to live or not to live. To live, means to fulfil the will of the Father, that is, to do good to others; not to live, means to fulfil our own will, and to do no good to others. It is in the power of every man to do the one or the other, to obtain life or to destroy it. See what the true life of man is like; a master gave his slaves a part of a valuable property, and ordered them to labor each with his own share. Some did so, and others did not, but hid what had been given them. The master came to call them to account; and to those who had done much he gave more than they already had, and from those who had done little he took everything away.

The share in the valuable property of the master is the spirit of life in man, the son of the Father. He who labors in life for the life of the spirit obtains eternal life; while he

who labors not, loses the life which was given him.

The true life is the common life of all, not the life of one. All must labor for the life of others.

After this Jesus went into the desert, and many of the people followed after him. In the evening the disciples came and said, With what shall we feed all these men? Among the people there were some who had nothing, and some who had taken with them bread and fish. Then Jesus said to the disciples, Give all the bread you have. He took the bread and gave it to his disciples, and they gave it to others, and then others began to do the same. And all ate what others gave, and all were satisfied, but they had no need to eat all they had. And Jesus said, So also you must do. Every one must not seek to provide himself with food, but must give to others what he has, as the spirit in man tells him to do.

The real food of man is the spirit of the Father. Men live only through the spirit.

We are bound to serve all the functions of life, for to live is not to do our own will, but

the will of the Father of life. The will of the Father is that the life of the spirit which is in every man should remain in him, and that all should preserve that life till the hour of death. The Father is the spirit which is the source of all life. Life is only the fulfilment of the will of the Father, and therefore for the fulfilment of the will of the spirit it is necessary to give up the things of the flesh. The flesh is food for the life of the spirit, and only by consuming the things of the flesh can the spirit live.

After this Jesus chose certain disciples and sent them abroad to proclaim everywhere his teaching of the life of the spirit. When he sent them he said, Go and preach the life of the spirit, and therefore give up beforehand all the pleasures of the flesh, have nothing of your own. Make yourselves ready for persecution, privations, and suffering. You will be hated by those who love the life of the flesh, and they will torture and kill you, but be not afraid. If you fulfil the will of the Father, you will have the life of the spirit, and no man can take it from you.

The disciples set forth, and when they re-

turned they announced that everywhere they had prevailed over evil.

Then the Pharisees said to Jesus that his teaching, even if it prevailed over evil, was an evil itself, inasmuch as those who professed it had to endure suffering. To this Jesus answered, Evil cannot prevail over evil, for evil can only be overcome by good. Good is the will of the Father-Spirit, of the spirit which is common to all men. Every man knows that good exists for him. If he does good to others, if he does what is the will of the Father, he does well. Therefore the fulfilment of the will of the Father-Spirit is good, although it be accompanied with suffering and death for those who accomplish it.

CHAPTER VI.

A FALSE LIFE.

And therefore, in order to attain to a true life, a man on earth must abstain from the false life of the flesh, and live in the spirit. (*On earth as in heaven.*)

For the life of the spirit there can be no difference between relations and strangers.

Jesus said that his mother and his brothers were nothing to him in their personal relationship; those only were near to him who fulfilled the will of the common Father.

The happiness and the life of man depend, not upon his family ties, but on the life of the spirit. Jesus says, Blessed are they who keep to the knowledge of the Father. A man who lives by the spirit has no home. Jesus said that no home had been appointed for him. For the fulfilment of the will of the Father no appointed place is needed, it is everywhere and always to be found.

The death of the body cannot be terrible to a man who has surrendered himself to the will of the Father, for the life of the spirit does not depend on the death of the body. Jesus says that he who believes in the life of the spirit cannot fear anything.

No cares can prevent a man living the life of the spirit. To the man who said that he would perform the will of the Father afterwards, but that he must first bury his father, Jesus answered, Only the dead can trouble about burying the dead; the living live always by fulfilling the will of the Father.

Care for family and domestic affairs cannot prevent the life of the spirit. He who troubles himself about the way in which his bodily life will be affected by his fulfilling the will of the Father, is like the tiller who while he ploughs looks behind him and not before.

The cares for the joys of the life of the flesh, which seem so important to men, are really but a dream. The only real business of life is the announcement of the will of the Father, attention to it, and fulfilment of it. To the reproach of Martha, that she was left alone to look after

the supper, while her sister Mary, instead of helping her, cared only to listen to his teaching, Jesus replied, In vain dost thou reproach her; trouble thyself with these things if they are necessary for thee, but let alone those who need not bodily pleasures; let them do the one thing needful in order to live.

Jesus said that he who wishes to obtain the true life, which consists in the fulfilment of the will of the Father, must before all things give up his own personal desires. Such an one must not only refrain from fashioning his life according to his own wishes, but be ready at any hour to endure all kinds of privation and suffering.

He who wishes to fashion his bodily life after his own will, will ruin the true life which fulfils the will of the Father.

And there is no advantage in the accumulation of necessity for the life of the body, if such should ruin the life of the spirit.

The life of the spirit is destroyed by nothing so surely as by the love of gain, the acquirement of wealth. Men forget that, whatever riches and property they acquire, they

may die at any moment, and that property is not needed for their life. Death hangs over each of us. Illness, the murderous violence of men, accident at any moment may put an end to life. The death of the body is the unavoidable condition of every instant of life. While a man lives he should look upon each hour of his life as a respite granted him by favor. We should remember this, and not say that we do not know it. We know and foresee all that happens on earth and in heaven, but we forget the death which we know awaits us every moment. If we did not forget this, we could not give ourselves up to the life of the body; we could not depend on it.

Christ went on to say, In order to follow my teaching, you must weigh well the advantages of serving the flesh and your own will against those of fulfilling the will of the Father. He alone who has carefully calculated this can become my pupil, but he who has done so will not prefer a pretended good and a pretended life to a true good and a true life. The true life is given to men, and men know it, and listen to its call, but, ever led away

by the cares of the moment, they lose this life.

The true life is like the feast given by a rich man, to which he invited guests. He called to them, as the voice of the Father-Spirit calls unto all. But some of the guests were occupied with their trade, others with their household affairs, others again with their family, and these came not to the feast. The poor, however, who had no earthly cares, went to the feast and were happy. And thus men, led away by their care for the life of the body, deprive themselves of the true life.

Whoever shall not utterly renounce all the cares and advantages of the life of the body, cannot fulfil the will of the Father, for it is not possible partly to serve ourselves and partly the Father. We must calculate whether it profit us to serve the flesh, whether we are able to fashion our lives as we will. We must do as a man does who would build a house, or who prepares for war. He calculates beforehand whether he will be able to finish his house, whether he can hope for victory. If he see that both are impossible, he will

throw away in vain neither his trouble nor his troops, to be ruined for nothing and to become the laughing-stock of others. Were it possible to regulate the life of the body according to our own wishes, it might be worth while to serve the flesh; but as that is impossible, it is better to renounce all that belongs to the flesh and serve only the spirit. Otherwise, it is neither one thing nor the other. Our bodily life we do not secure, and our spiritual life we lose. Therefore, in order to fulfil the will of the Father, we must utterly renounce all the works of the flesh.

The life of the body is as the imaginary treasure of another entrusted to us, that we may use it so as to procure for ourselves true riches. If a steward serve a rich man, and know that, however long he may serve this master, the latter will call him to account and leave him with nothing, he does wisely, while he still administers his master's wealth, to do good to others. In that case, if his master send him off, those to whom he has done good will receive and keep him. Men should do the same with the life of the body.

The life of the body is the treasure of another of which they dispose only for a time. If they use that treasure well, they will obtain true riches for themselves.

Unless we give up our pretended wealth, we shall obtain no real wealth. We cannot serve both the false life of the flesh and that of the spirit; we must serve the one or the other. We cannot strive for riches and serve God. What is great in the sight of men is an abomination unto God. Wealth to God is an evil thing. The rich man is wrong in that he eats in abundance and luxury while the beggar hungers at his gate. All should know that the retaining of property for ourselves is a direct non-fulfilment of the will of the Father.

There came once to Jesus a rich Pharisee, and he began to boast that he had fulfilled all the commandments of the law. Jesus reminded him of the commandment to love all men as we love ourselves, saying that this was the will of the Father. The Pharisee answered that he had ever done this. Then Jesus said that it was not true. If thou didst wish to fulfil the will of the Father, thou

wouldst have no property. It is impossible to fulfil the will of the Father, if thou hast goods which thou givest not to others.

And Jesus said to his disciples, It seems to men that without property they cannot live; but I say unto you that the true life is in giving of your own unto others. A certain man, by name Zaccheus, heard the teaching of Jesus, believed it, and invited Jesus into his house, saying, The half of my substance I give to the poor, and I will repay fourfold those whom I have offended. And Jesus said, Behold a man in the act of fulfilling the will of the Father; but there is no position in which the will of the Father is wholly fulfilled; our whole life is but the attempt to fulfil it.

Good has no measure of comparative value; we cannot say who has done more, who less. The widow who gives her last mite gives more than the rich man who gives his thousands. Neither can we measure good by utility.

Let us take as our example of the way to do good the woman who took pity on Jesus, and heedlessly anointed his feet with the most valuable oil. Judas said that she had acted

foolishly, that she had expended what might have fed many. But Judas was a thief and a liar, who spoke of the good things of the flesh, and never thought of the poor. It is not worldly advantage, nor the amount of it, that is wanted, but that we should at every instant of our lives love others and give up to them what is our own.

CHAPTER VII.

I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE.

The true food of life is the fulfilment of the will of the Father, and union with Him. (Give us this day our daily bread.)

In answer to the demand of the Jews for proof of the truth of his teaching, Jesus said that the proof was this, that he taught not of himself, but of the common Father of all.

I teach what is good in the sight of the Father of all men, and therefore what is good for all men. Do what I say, fulfil my five commandments, and you will see that what I say is right. The fulfilment of these five commandments delivers the world from evil, and the commandments are true. It is clear that he who teaches, not what is his own personal will, but the will of Him who sent him, teaches truth. The law of Moses teaches the fulfilment of the will of man,

and therefore it is full of contradictions; my teaching prescribes the fulfilment of the will of the Father, and therefore it leads in all things to one end.

The Jews did not understand him, and sought for external evidence that he was the Christ spoken of by the prophets. To this he answered, Seek not to know who I am, nor whether your prophets wrote of me or not, but take to heart my teaching and what I say to you of our common Father. Myself, as a man, you need not believe in, but believe in what I tell you in the name of the common Father of all men.

No external proof of whence I came is wanted, but that you should follow my teaching. He who follows that shall obtain a true life. There can be no proof of the truth of my teaching. It is light, and, as light cannot be made light, so the truth of what is true cannot be proved. My teaching is light, and whoever sees it has light and life, and for him all proof is needless. But whoever is in darkness must come to the light.

But the Jews again asked him who he was

after the flesh. He said to them, I am what I told you from the first, a man, and the son of the Father of life. Only he who understands that he is himself a son of this Father (which truth I teach), and who fulfils His will, ceases to be a slave, and becomes free; for it is only the error which makes us take the life of the body for the real life, that prevents our being free. Only he who understands the truth, that life consists only in the fulfilment of the will of his Father, is free and immortal.

As the slave does not stay in the master's house forever, whereas the son does always, so the man who lives as a slave to the flesh does not live a life which lasts forever, but the man who fulfils in the spirit the will of the Father has life eternal. In order to understand me you must understand that my Father is not your father — is not the one whom you call God. Your father is the god of the flesh, and my Father is the Spirit of life. Your father is the god of vengeance, the slayer of men, he who punishes men, and my Father gives life. We are, therefore, the children of different fathers. I seek the truth, and you desire

to slay me, in order to please your god. Your god is a devil, the cause of evil, and if you serve him you serve the devil. My teaching is that we are the sons of the Father of life, and he who believes in my teaching will not see death. The Jews said, How can it be that a man shall not die, when all, even those most pleasing to God, even Abraham himself, died? How canst thou say that thou thyself, and those who believe in thy teaching, shall not die?

To this Jesus answered that he taught nothing of himself. I speak of that first cause of life which you call God, and which is in men. This cause I know, and cannot help knowing; I know its will and fulfil that will, and of that first cause of life I say that it has been, is, and will be, and that for it there is no death.

To require a proof of the truth of my teaching, is as if proof were required of a blind man, why and how he saw light.

A blind man cured of his blindness, and remaining the same man that he was before, could only say that he had been blind, and that now he saw. In the same way, the man who

once did not, but now does, understand the meaning of his life, can say no more.

Such a man can only say that formerly he did not know true happiness in life, and that now he does. Like the blind man cured of his blindness, if told that he has been cured by wrong treatment, that the man who cured him is a sinner, that he ought to have been cured differently, he can only reply that he knows nothing about right or wrong treatment, about the sinfulness of the man who cured him, or of any other better means of cure; he knows only that he was blind, and that now he can see.

It is thus with the man who has attained to an understanding of the meaning of life, of true happiness, and the fulfilment of the will of the Father; he cannot say whether this teaching is right or not, whether the teacher is a sinner or not, who discovered this teaching, or whether a better happiness can or cannot be known. He says that formerly he saw no meaning in life, and now he does see a meaning: he knows no more.

And Jesus said, My teaching is the awakening of a life that was asleep. He who believes

in my teaching wakes to eternal life, and is alive after death.

My teaching is not to be proved, but men follow it because it alone promises life to them.

As sheep follow the shepherd who gives them food and life, so men accept my teaching because it gives life to all. As sheep do not follow the thief who climbs into the fold, but flee from him, so men cannot believe in a teaching founded on violence and slaughter. My teaching is a door for the sheep, and all those who follow me find a true life. The good shepherd is himself the master, and loves his sheep, and gives his life for them; the bad shepherd is the hired one, who loves not his sheep. The same with teachers: he only is a true one who does not pity himself, and he is a bad one who makes self his first object. My teaching is that we take no care for ourselves, but be ready to give up our bodily life for the life of the spirit; this is what I teach and what I fulfil.

The Jews still did not understand him, and still sought for proof whether he were Christ or not, and consequently whether they should

believe him or not. They said, Do not perplex us, but say at once, art thou Christ or no? Jesus answered that they should believe not words but deeds. By the works which I teach, you will understand whether I teach the truth or not. Do what I do, and cease to weigh words. Fulfil the will of the Father, then indeed you all will be united with me and with the Father, for I, the Son of Man, am what the Father is. I am that which you call God, and which I call the Father. I and the Father are one. In your scriptures it is written that God said to men, Ye are gods. Every man by the spirit is the son of the Father, and if he lives to fulfil the will of the Father, he is one with the Father. If I fulfil the will of the Father, the Father is in me and I am in the Father.

After this Jesus asked his disciples how they understood his teaching about the Son of Man. Simon Peter answered, Thy teaching is that thou art the Son of the God of life, that God is the life of the spirit in man. And Jesus said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon, in having understood this, for man indeed could not have

revealed this unto thee, but thou hast understood this by the revelation of God within thee.

The true life of men is founded on this knowledge, and such life knows no death.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE NOT IN TIME.

Therefore a man really lives when he thinks only of fulfilling the will of the Father in the present, and leaves all thought of the past and of the future. (Give us now our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.)

To the doubts of his disciples, as to what would be their reward for renouncing the life of the flesh, Jesus answered, (There can be no reward for the man who understands the meaning of my teaching: firstly, because a man who renounces his relations and those dear to him, and his property, in the name of my teaching, gains a hundredfold more friends and property;) secondly, because a man who seeks a reward, seeks to have more than others, and that is the thing most contrary to the fulfilment of the will of the Father. In the king-

dom of Heaven there are neither greater nor less; all are equal.

Those who seek a reward for doing good are like workmen who demand a higher payment than what they have agreed for with the master, on the plea that on their own judgment they are worthier than others. Reward and punishment, abasement and exaltation, do not exist for him who understands my teaching.

No one can be greater or of more importance than another, according to the teaching of Christ.

Every one may fulfil the will of the Father, but by doing so no one becomes superior to, or better than, another. Only kings and those that serve them think themselves so. According to my teaching, says Jesus, there can be no superiors, because he who wishes to be better than others must be their servant, because my teaching is that life is given a man not for profit of being served, but for devotion of service altogether for the sake of others, and that he who does not follow this teaching, but exalts himself, shall but become lower.

In order not to think of reward and exalta-

tion of self, we must understand what is the real meaning of life. It lies in the fulfilment of the will of the Father, that what He has given should be returned to Him. As the shepherd leaves the whole flock to search for one lost sheep, as a woman turns over everything to find a lost coin, so the Father shows Himself to us as the One who draws back to Himself what has once been His.

We must understand what makes life real. True life appears in this, that what is lost returns to the owner, that that which sleeps is awakened. Men who possess a true life, and who have returned to the cause from which they sprang, cannot, like other men, stay to consider who is better and who worse, but, being sharers in the life of the Father, can only rejoice over the lost one who returns to the Father. If a son, who has lost his way and wandered from the Father, repent and return to Him, surely the other sons of the Father cannot envy his joy, and can only be glad of the return of a brother.

In order to believe in this teaching, to change our lives and fulfil it, no external proofs, no

rewards, are needed; we require a clear understanding of what true life is. If men think that they are the masters of their own lives, that their lives were given them to be spent in the pleasures of the flesh, naturally every act of self-sacrifice for others will appear to them worthy of reward, and unrecompensed they will give up nothing. If the laborers in a garden, who work there on condition of giving the fruits to the master, having forgotten that agreement, are required to pay according to it, they will, when the chance occurs, kill him who makes the demand. Those who consider themselves to be masters of their own lives, think like the laborers, and do not understand that life is a gift of the spirit, which requires the fulfilment of its will. In order to believe and act, we must understand that man can do nothing of himself, that if he renounces the life of the flesh for the sake of doing good, he does nothing for which he can claim thanks and reward. We must understand that a man, when he does good, does only what he is bound to do, what he cannot but do. It is only by thus understanding his life that a man

can so believe as really to be capable of doing good works.

It is this understanding of life which makes the kingdom of Heaven, which is invisible, and not such as can be shown anywhere. The kingdom of Heaven is in the understanding of men. The world lives as it has always done. Men eat, drink, give in marriage, trade, and die, and all the while apart from these things there lives in men's thoughts this kingdom. The kingdom of Heaven is the understanding of life, like a tree in spring growing of itself.

The true life through the fulfilment of the will of the Father is not the life which is past, is not that which is to come, but the life of the present moment, what each of us must do now. It follows, therefore, that we must never cease in our efforts to carry out this life. Men are appointed to care not for the life of the past or for that of the future, but for the actual life at any moment, and during that life to fulfil the will of the Father of all men. If they lose their hold of this life through not fulfilling the the will of the Father, they cannot again recover it: the watchman appointed to watch

through the night does not perform his duty if he fall asleep but for a moment, for in that moment the thief may come. Man, therefore, must apply all his energies to the present hour, for the fulfilment of the Father's will can be achieved only in the present. The will of the Father is the life and the happiness of all men. Therefore the fulfilment of His will is the good of all men. Only those live who do good. Good to men (at the present moment) is life, and unites us to the common Father.

CHAPTER IX.

TEMPTATIONS.

The delusions of the individual and temporal life hide from men the true life, which alone is real in union with the Father. (*Lead us not into temptation.*)

MAN is born with a knowledge of the true life through the fulfilment of the will of the Father. Children live this life, and in them is seen the will of the Father. In order to understand the teaching of Jesus, we must understand the life of children, and be what they are.

Children always live according to the will of the Father, and never break the five commandments. They would never break them, were they not led into temptation by their elders. Men corrupt children by leading them into temptation, and by teaching them to break the commandments. When they do so, they behave like one who, tying a millstone around

another's neck, casts him into a river. Were there no corruption, the world would have happiness. The world is unhappy only through corruption. Corruption is an evil which men commit for the pretended good of their temporal life. Corruption ruins men, therefore we must sacrifice everything in order not to succumb to it. The temptation to sin against the first commandment is that men account themselves upright in the sight of their fellows, and others as indebted to them. In order not to fall into this temptation men should remember the infinite debt which all men owe to the Father, and that they can only acquit themselves of this debt by showing forgiveness to their brethren.

Therefore men must forgive offences against themselves, and not be moved to anger even though the offender trespass again and again. However many times a man is wronged, he must forgive and bear no malice, for the kingdom of Heaven is only possible where there is forgiveness. If we do not forgive, we do the same as the debtor did. A debtor, who owed much, came to the master and asked to be for-

given his debts. The master forgave him all. The debtor went forth and tormented another man whose debt to him was small. That we may have life, we must fulfil the will of the Father; we ask forgiveness from the Father of life for that in which we fail to fulfil His will, and we hope to obtain that forgiveness. What do we, then, when we ourselves do not forgive? We avoid to do for others that which we crave for ourselves.

The will of the Father is happiness, and evil is that which separates us from the Father. How should we not, then, try to put an end to evil as quickly as possible? for evil ruins us and deprives us of life. Evil plunges us into bodily ruin. As much as we undo this evil, so much do we acquire of life. If evil does not divide us, and we are united in love, we have all that we can wish to have.

The temptation to sin against the second commandment is that we believe ourselves to have been created for the pleasures of the flesh, and that, by leaving one wife and taking another, we add to those pleasures. In order not to fall into this temptation, we must remember

that the will of the Father is not that a man should find comfort in the beauty of a woman, but that, having chosen a wife, he should form with her one flesh. The will of the Father is that every man should have a wife, and that every woman should have a husband. If each man have but one wife, all men will have wives, and all wives husbands. Therefore whoever changes his wife, deprives a wife of a husband, and gives occasion to another husband to leave his own wife and take the forsaken one. It is allowable to have no wife, but not to have more than one, for that is contrary to the will of the Father, which consists in the union of one husband and one wife.

The temptation to sin against the third commandment is that men, for the happiness of temporal life, have instituted authorities and governments, and require oaths to be taken to fulfil the obligations imposed by them. In order not to fall into this temptation, we must remember that we are bound to answer for our lives to no one but to God. Men should look on these demands of the civil authorities as being acts of violence, and, according to the

commandment, not to resist evil, they should give up and fulfil what is required of them, give their property and their labor, but they cannot give promises and oaths which bind their actions. Oaths which are imposed on men make men evil. A man who believes his life to depend on the will of the Father, cannot promise what his actions shall be, because for such a man nothing is more sacred than his own life.

The temptation to sin against the fourth commandment is that men, when they give way to envy and revenge, think by such means to set others right. If a man offend another, these men think it necessary to punish him, and that it is right to try to condemn him.

In order not to fall into this temptation, we must remember that men are told not to judge but to save one another, and that they themselves, committing injustice, cannot judge of what is unjust in others. Men can do but one thing — teach others by giving an example of purity, forgiveness, and love.

The temptation to sin against the fifth commandment is that men think there is a difference between their fellow-countrymen and for-

eigners, and that consequently it is necessary to defend themselves against other nations and to injure them. In order not to fall into this temptation, we must know that all the commandments are expressed in one, the fulfilment of the will of the Father, who gives life and happiness to all men alike, and we must do the same good to all men. If other men make a difference, and nations, because they account each other foreigners, make war on each other, each of us notwithstanding should fulfil the will of the Father, and do good to every man, even though he belong to another nationality and make war on our own.

In order not to fall into any of the errors by which man is beset, we must keep our minds fixed on spiritual things, and not on those which concern the body. If a man once understand that only in the will of the Father he has the life which he at the moment lives, no privation, no suffering, nor even death itself can terrify him. Only he really lives who is ready at any moment to give his bodily life for the fulfilment of the will of the Father.

In order that all men might understand

that there is no death for those who truly live, Jesus said, The life eternal must not be understood as being like the present life. Time and place are not in the true life which is in the will of the Father.

Those who have awakened to the true life live in the will of the Father, and the will of the Father knows neither time nor place. They are alive for the Father. If they have died for us, they are alive for God. This is why one commandment includes all; love with all your strength the origin of life, and, as a consequence, every man who bears within himself that origin.

And Jesus said, That origin of life is the Christ whom you expect. The understanding of this origin of life, for whom there are no persons, no time, and no place, is the very Son of Man of whom I have taught you. Whatever hides from men this origin of life is seduction. There is the seduction of Scribes and Pharisees, give not way to it; there is the seduction of power, give not way to it; and there is again the most dangerous seduction, that of the teachers of religion who call them-

selves orthodox. Beware of this above all others, because these self-styled teachers have invented a false system of worship, and would allure you from the true God.

Instead of serving the Father of life by works, they have put words in their place, they teach words and themselves do nothing, therefore you can learn nothing but words from them. The Father needs not words but deeds. They have nothing to teach, because they know nothing, but for personal advantage they call themselves teachers. But you know that no one can be a teacher of others. There is but one teacher for all, the Lord of Life, the spirit. These self-styled teachers, thinking to teach others, deprive themselves of the true life and prevent others from knowing it. They teach men to please their God by external rites, and believe that oaths can bring men to faith. They care only for outward things. If there be but the appearance of faith, they care not for what is in the hearts of men. They are like pompous sepulchres, outside beautiful, and within an abomination. They honor the saints and mar-

tyrs with words, but they are the same who formerly put them to death, and now they would kill and torment the saints. From them come all the temptations of the world, for they offer evil in the name of good. Their temptation is the root of all temptation, for they have reviled all that is sacred on earth. They will remain long unconverted, they will continue to practise their deceptions, and to increase the sum of evil in the world; but the time will come when all their temples will be thrown down, all their outward worship abolished, and then men will understand and be united through love in the service of the one Father of life, and in the fulfilment of His will.

CHAPTER X.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TEMPTATION.

Therefore to get rid of evil, we must every hour of our life be in unity with the Father. (Lead us not into temptation.)

The Jews saw that the teaching of Jesus destroyed their state religion and nationality, and saw at the same time that they could not refute his teaching, so they resolved to kill him. The innocence of Jesus and the justice of his cause stayed them for a time, but the High Priest Caiaphas bethought him of a means of having Jesus put to death, notwithstanding his innocence. Caiaphas said, They had no need to inquire whether this man was innocent or not, for the question was whether they wished the Jewish nation to remain one and indivisible, or that it should perish and be lost among others. Our nation will perish and be lost, if we let this man alone and do not kill him. This argument was decisive, and

the Pharisees condemned Jesus to death, and called upon the people to seize him as soon as he appeared in Jerusalem.

Jesus, though he knew of this, came at the feast of Easter to Jerusalem His disciples would have persuaded him not to go there, but Jesus said, Whatever the Pharisees may wish to do unto me, whatever others may do, nothing can change what is for me the truth. If I see the light, I know where I am, and whither I go. (Only he who knows not truth can fear anything or doubt of anything.) (He alone stumbles who does not see.)

So he went to Jerusalem. On the way he stopped at Bethany. There Mary poured upon him a vessel of costly ointment. Jesus, knowing that bodily death awaited him, said to his disciples, who reproached Mary for having anointed him with ointment so costly as spikenard, that it was a preparation of his body for death.

When Jesus left Bethany and went to Jerusalem a great multitude met him and followed him, and this the more persuaded the Pharisees of the necessity of putting him to death. They

only waited for an opportunity of seizing him. He knew that the slightest imprudent word of his against the law would be the pretext for his punishment, but notwithstanding he entered the Temple and again proclaimed that the worship of the Jews, with their sacrifices and oblations, had hitherto been false, and preached his own doctrines. But his teaching, founded on the prophets, was such that the Pharisees were unable to find an offence against the law, for which he might be condemned to death, all the more that the greater part of the people were in his favor.

Now at the feast there were certain heathen, and they, hearing of the teaching of Jesus, wished to speak with him about it. The disciples, when they heard of this, were frightened. They were afraid that Jesus, in his conversation with the heathen, would betray himself, and anger the people. At first they wished to prevent Jesus meeting them, but afterwards decided to tell him who wished to speak with him. On hearing this Jesus was disturbed. He understood that if he preached to gentiles he would clearly show that he had

cast off the whole of the Jewish law, would set the common people against himself, and give occasion to the Pharisees for accusing him of associating with the hated gentiles. Jesus was disturbed, knowing this, but he knew also that his vocation was to explain to men, the sons of one Father, their unity without distinction of faith. He knew that this step would ruin him in his bodily life, but that his thus perishing would give men a true understanding of life, and therefore he said, As the grain of wheat must perish for the fruit to grow, so a man must lose his life in the body to bring forth the fruit of the spirit. He who keeps the life of the body, loses the true life; and he who loses the life of the body, receives the true life. I am troubled by what awaits me, but truly up to this time I have lived only for that, only in order to live till this hour; how can I not do what I have to do? Therefore at this hour let the will of the Father be shown in me.

Then, turning to the people, to the heathen and the Jews, Jesus spoke out clearly what he had said only in private to Nicodemus. He said, The life of mankind with its various

faiths and various governments, must cease. All human authorities must come to an end. It is only necessary to understand man's position as a son of the Father of life, and this understanding will destroy all divisions and authorities made among men, and will unite all men in one whole.

The Jews said, Thou destroyest all our religion. According to our law, there is a Christ, and thou sayest there is only a Son of Man, and that he must be exalted. What does this mean? He answered them, To exalt the Son of Man means to live by the light of the understanding which is in men, in order to live, while there is light, according to it. I teach no new faith, but only what every man knows in himself. Every man knows that he has life in him, and every man knows that life is given to him and to all men by the Father of life. My teaching is only that you should love the life given by the Father to all men.

Many of those not in authority believed Jesus; but the great men and the rulers did not believe, because they would not judge of his speech by the meaning which it had for

eternity; they considered his doctrines only by their relation to him. They saw that he turned the people away from them, and wished to kill him, but were afraid to take him openly, so they desired to take him, not in Jerusalem and in the light of day, but somewhere secretly.

Then there came to them one of the twelve disciples, called Judas Iscariot, and they gave him money that he should betray Jesus into the hands of the servants when he was not with the people. Judas promised them, and again joined Jesus, awaiting the time to betray him. On the first day of the feast, Jesus and the disciples celebrated the passover, and Judas, thinking that Jesus did not know of his treachery, was among them. But Jesus knew that Judas had sold him for a price, and, when they were all seated at table, Jesus took the bread, broke it into twelve parts, and gave a piece to each of the disciples, to Judas among the rest, and without naming any one, said, Take, eat my body.

Then he took the cup with wine, and gave it to them, that all might drink, and Judas with

them, saying, One of you will shed my blood; drink my blood.

Then Jesus arose and began to wash the feet of all the disciples and of Judas, and when he had finished, he said, I know that one of you will betray me unto death, and will shed my blood, but I have given him to eat and to drink, and have washed his feet. (I have done this to teach you how you should behave to those who do you evil.) If you act thus, you shall be blessed. The disciples still continued to ask which of them should be his betrayer. Jesus, however, would not name him, lest they should punish him. When it grew dark Jesus pointed to Judas, and told him to go out. Judas rose from the table, went out, and no one stopped him.

Then Jesus said, This is what it is to elevate the Son of Man. To do so means to be (loving) like the Father, not to those alone who love us, but to all, even to those who do (ill) to us. Therefore, do not argue about my teaching, do not reason about it as the Pharisees do; but do what I have always done, what I have now done before you. I give you one com-

mandment — love all men. My whole teaching lies in this, that ye love men always and to the end. After this, fear fell on the soul of Jesus, and with his disciples in the night he went into a garden to hide himself. On the way he said to them, You are none of you strong, but all timid; when I am taken you will all flee from me. Then Peter said, No, I will not leave thee, I will defend thee even unto death. And all the disciples said the same. Then Jesus said to them, If it be so, prepare for defence; collect your stores, for you will have to hide; take arms in order to defend yourselves. The disciples said that they had two swords. When Jesus heard them speak of swords, he was grieved in his heart, and going to a solitary place he began to pray, telling his disciples to do the same, but they did not understand him. Jesus said, Father, put an end to the struggle of temptation within me. Strengthen me to the fulfilment of Thy will; I desire not my own will, the defence of the life of my body; I desire Thy will, in order not to resist evil. The disciples still understood not. He said to them, Think

not of the flesh, but strive to raise yourselves in the spirit; the spirit is strong, but the flesh is weak. And again he said, Father, if this suffering be inevitable, let me bear it; but in all my suffering I desire only that Thy will, and not mine, be done. The disciples did not understand. Then again Jesus struggled with his temptation, and at length conquered it, and coming to the disciples said, Now all is decided, you may be at peace; I will not contend, but will give myself into the hands of the men of this world.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FAREWELL DISCOURSE.

Personal life is a deception of the flesh, an evil. True life is the life which is common to all men. (But deliver us from the evil one.)

Jesus, feeling himself ready for death, went forth to give himself up. Peter stopped him, and asked him whither he was going. Jesus answered, I am going whither thou canst not come. I am ready for death, and thou art not yet ready. Peter said, Not so; I am now ready to lay down my life for thee. Jesus answered that a man can promise nothing. He said to his disciples, I know that death awaits me, but I believe in the life of the Father, and therefore do not fear death. Be not troubled by my death, but believe in the true God and in the Father of life, and then my death will not seem terrible to you. If I am united with the Father of life, I cannot lose

life. It is true that I do not tell you the how and the where of life after death, but I show you the way into true life. My teaching does not speak of what life will do, but points out the only true way to life, by union with the Father. The Father is the beginning of life. My teaching is that life is in the will of the Father, and that the fulfilment of His will gives life and happiness to all men. Your guide, when I am no longer with you, will be your knowledge of the truth. While you fulfil my teaching, you will always feel that you are in the truth, that the Father is in you, and you are in the Father. And you, knowing the Father within you, will feel that peace which nothing can take from you. Therefore, if you know the truth and live in it, neither my death nor your own can alarm you.

Men imagine that each has a separate existence in his own individual will; but this is a deception. The only true life is that which acknowledges the source of life in the will of the Father. My teaching unfolds this unity of life, and represents life, not as consisting of separate branches, but as the one tree from

which all branches grow. Only he who lives in the will of the Father, like the branch on a tree, really lives, and he who lives by his own will, perishes like the branch which drops off. The Father gave away my life for the triumph of good, and I have taught you to live for this victory. If you fulfil my commandments, you will be blessed. The commandment in which my whole teaching is expressed is this only, that all men should love one another. Love consists in the laying down of our bodily life for others. There is no other explanation of love. When you fulfil my commandment of love, you will not be as slaves that without understanding obey their master's orders, but as free men, free as I myself am, for I have explained to you the meaning of life which follows on the knowledge of the Father of life. You have accepted my teaching, not because you have chosen it by chance, but because it is the only true teaching, and alone can make men free.

The teaching of the world is to do evil to men; my teaching is to love one another, and therefore the world has hated you as it has

hated me. The world does not understand my teaching, and therefore it will persecute you, and do you evil in the belief that by doing so it is serving God. Be not, then, astonished at this, and understand that this must be so. The world, not understanding the true God, must persecute you, and you must uphold the truth.

Do not sorrow because they kill me, for they will do so because I uphold the truth. Therefore, my death is needed that truth may be upheld. My death, in which I do not renounce the truth, shall strengthen you, and you will understand what is false and what is true, and what follows from the knowledge of falsehood and of truth. You will understand that the error lies in this, that men believe in the life of the body, and do not believe in the life of the spirit; that the truth lies in union with the Father; and that from this follows the victory of the spirit over the flesh.

When my life in the body has ceased, my spirit will be with you. But you, like all other men, will not always feel in you the strength of the spirit. You will sometimes grow weak

and lose its strength; you will fall into temptation, and again at times awaken to the true life. You will be often subject to the enslaving enticements of the flesh, but that will be only for a time; you will have to suffer and to be born again in the spirit; as a woman suffers in the pains of childbirth, and then feels the joy of having brought a man into the world, so will you feel, when, after the enslavements of the flesh, the spirit within you is roused again to life. Then you will feel a happiness and a peace that leaves you nothing more to desire. Know, then, beforehand, that, notwithstanding persecution, internal struggles, and the weakening of the spirit, the spirit is alive in you, and that the only true God is the understanding of the will of the Father, which has been unfolded to you by me.

Then addressing himself to the Father-Spirit, Jesus said, I have done what Thou hast commanded me, I have revealed to men that Thou art the beginning of all. And they have understood me. I have taught them that they have all proceeded from one source of infinite life, and that therefore they are all one; that

as the Father is in me, and I in the Father, so are they one with me, and with the Father. I have revealed to them that as Thou in love hast sent them into the world, so they through love must live in the world.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VICTORY OF THE SPIRIT OVER THE FLESH.

Therefore for the man who lives not a personal life, but in the common life which is through the will of the Father, there is no evil. The death of the body is union with the Father. (Thine be the kingdom, the power, and the glory.)

When Jesus had finished his discourse to his disciples, he arose, and, instead of escaping or defending himself, he went to meet Judas, who had brought soldiers to take him. Jesus went up to him and asked him why he was there. Judas gave no reply, and a crowd of soldiers surrounded Jesus. Peter rushed to defend his teacher, and, drawing his sword, began to fight; but Jesus stopped him, saying that whoso takes the sword shall himself perish by the sword, and ordered him to give up his sword. Then Jesus said to those who came to take him, I formerly went amongst you alone

without fear, and now I fear you not, and give myself up unto you. You may do with me what you will. And then all the disciples forsook him and fled. Jesus remained alone. The officer ordered the soldiers to bind him and take him to Annas, who had been high priest, and lived in the same house with Caiaphas, the latter being the then high priest. It was he who thought of the pretext which decided the Jews to kill Jesus — either they must kill him or the whole nation must perish. Jesus, feeling himself in the hands of the Father, was ready for death, and did not resist when he was seized, nor did he fear when they led him away. Peter, who had just before promised Jesus that he would not abandon him, but would lay down his life for him, who had tried to defend him, now when he saw that Jesus was led away to punishment, was afraid that he might suffer with him, and to the questions of the servants, whether he were not one of Jesus' followers, denied it, and went away, and only afterwards, when he heard the cock crow, did he understand all that Jesus had said to him. He understood that there are two

temptations of the flesh, that of fear and that of using violence; he understood then that Jesus had struggled against these temptations when he prayed in the garden, and invited his disciples to pray. Now he had himself fallen into both these temptations of the flesh against which Jesus had warned him; he had tried to resist evil by violence, and to defend truth by fighting and evil-doing; he had been unable to withstand the fear of bodily suffering, and had denied his teacher. Jesus had not given way to the temptations of resistance when his disciples had secured two swords to defend him with, nor to the temptation of fear when he stood before the people in Jerusalem in the presence of the heathen, nor when the soldiers came to bind him and lead him to his trial.

Jesus was brought to Caiaphas. Caiaphas asked Jesus as to his teaching, but Jesus, knowing that Caiaphas questioned him not in order to know what his teaching was but only in order to accuse him, gave no direct answer, but said, I have concealed nothing, and conceal nothing; if thou wouldst know what my teaching is, ask of those who have heard and under-

stood it. For this, one of the servitors of the high priest struck Jesus on the cheek, and Jesus asked why he had struck him. The man gave no answer, and the high priest proceeded with the trial. They brought witnesses to prove that Jesus had boasted of destroying the Jewish religion. The high priest again questioned Jesus; but he, seeing that the other questioned him not to learn anything but only to keep up the appearance of justice, answered nothing.

Then the high priest asked him to say if he were Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered, Yes, I am Christ, the Son of God; and now, while persecuting me you will see that the Son of Man is equal to God.

And the high priest rejoiced over these words, and said to the other judges, Are not these words sufficient to condemn him? And the judges answered that they were, and condemned him to death. When they had said this, the crowd threw themselves upon Jesus, and they beat him, spat in his face, and abused him, but he held his peace.

The Jews had no power to put a man to

death, they required a decision from the Roman governor; and therefore, having condemned Jesus according to their law, and abused him, they brought him before Pilate, that he should order him to be put to death. Pilate asked why they wished for his death, and they answered, Because he is an evil man. Pilate said, If he is an evil doer, judge him according to your law. They replied, We desire that thou shouldst put him to death, because he has sinned against Cæsar: he is a rebel, he has set the people at variance, he forbids tribute to be paid to Cæsar, and calls himself the King of the Jews. Pilate called Jesus to him and said, What means this? how art thou King of the Jews? Jesus said, Wouldst thou really know what my kingdom is, or dost thou ask me only for appearance sake? Pilate answered, I am no Jew, and it is the same to me whether thou callest thyself the King of the Jews or not; but I ask thee what man art thou, and why do they say that thou art a King? Jesus said, They say truly that I call myself a King. I am a King, but my kingdom is not of this world but of heaven. Earthly kings kill and fight,

and they have soldiers to aid them, but thou seest that I do not resist, though I have been bound and beaten. I am a heavenly King, and all-powerful in the spirit.

Pilate said, Then it is true that thou callest thyself a King? Jesus answered, Thou knowest it thyself. (Every man who lives in the truth is free.) By this alone I live, and for this alone I teach; I reveal to men the truth that they are free through the spirit. Pilate said, Thou teachest truth, but no one knows what truth is, and each has his own conception of the truth. And having said this, he turned from Jesus and went again unto the Jews, and said to them, I find no fault in this man. Why would you put him to death? The priests answered that he deserved death because he roused the people to revolt. Then Pilate, in the presence of the high priests, began to question Jesus; but Jesus, seeing that he was only questioned for form's sake, answered nothing. Then Pilate said, I alone cannot condemn him; take him before Herod.

In Herod's court Jesus gave no answer to the accusations of the high priests; and Herod,

taking him for an idle boaster, ordered him to be arrayed in a gorgeous garment, and sent him back to Pilate. Pilate pitied Jesus, and would have persuaded the high priest to pardon him, if but in honor of the feast; but the priests held to what they had said, and they and all the people after them cried aloud, Let him be crucified! Pilate a second time tried to persuade them to let Jesus go, but the priests and the people still cried that he must be put to death. They said, He is guilty in that he calls himself the Son of God. Pilate again called Jesus before him, and asked him, What does it mean that thou callest thyself the Son of God? Who art thou? Jesus answered nothing. Then Pilate said, Why dost thou not answer me, when I have power to put thee to death or to set thee free? Jesus answered, Thou hast no power over me. Power cometh only from above. Then Pilate for the third time tried to persuade the Jews to let Jesus go, but they said, If thou dost not put to death this man whom we have shown to be a rebel against Cæsar, thou thyself art not a friend but an enemy of Cæsar. On hearing these words

Pilate gave way, and ordered Jesus to be put to death; but first he had him stripped and scourged, and then again clothed him in a gorgeous robe, when he was beaten, mocked, and abused. Then they gave him a cross to carry, brought him to the place of punishment, and crucified him. And when Jesus was hanging on the cross all the people reviled him. To all this he answered, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And again, when death was near, he said, My Father, into Thy hands I give my spirit; and bending his head he gave up the ghost.

THE CONCLUSION.

TO UNDERSTAND LIFE IS TO DO GOOD.

The good tidings of Jesus Christ is the revelation of the understanding of life.

To understand life we must know that the source of life is infinite good, and that consequently the life of man is the same. To understand this source we must know that the spirit of life in man proceeds from it. Man, who before did not exist, was called into being by this cause of life. This cause gave happiness to man, and therefore happiness is in its nature.

In order not to be led away from the source of his life, man must keep to the only property of this source which he can understand, the happiness of the works of love. Therefore the life of man must be devoted to happiness, *i.e.*, to good works and to love. Man can do good to none but his fellow-men. All individual desires of the flesh are irreconcilable with the

source of good, and therefore man must renounce them, and sacrifice the life of his body to the cause of goodness, and to active love for his neighbor. From the understanding of life as revealed by Jesus Christ, follows love to our neighbor. There are two proofs of the truth of this understanding; one is that for those who do not accept it the cause of life appears an illusion which leads men to desire such life and happiness as they cannot attain; the other is that man in his heart feels love and good to his neighbor to be the only true, free, and eternal life.

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